

THE Atlantic

NOVEMBER 2002

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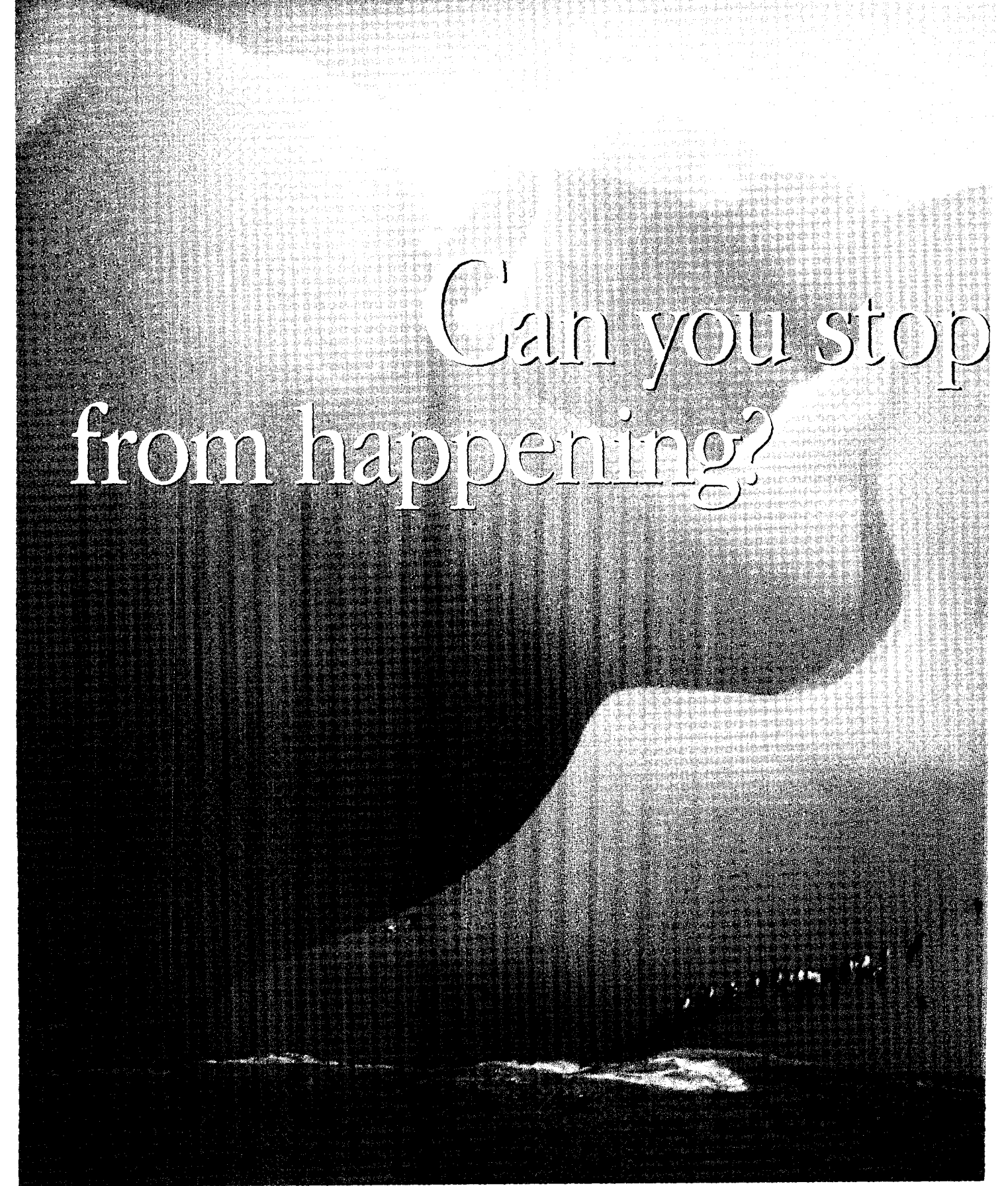
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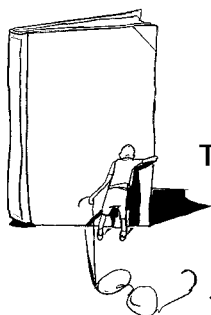
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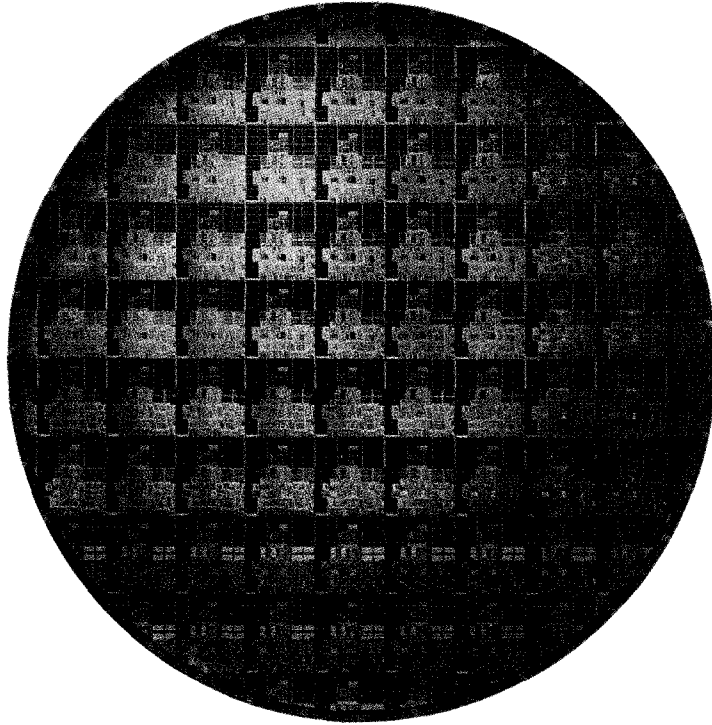
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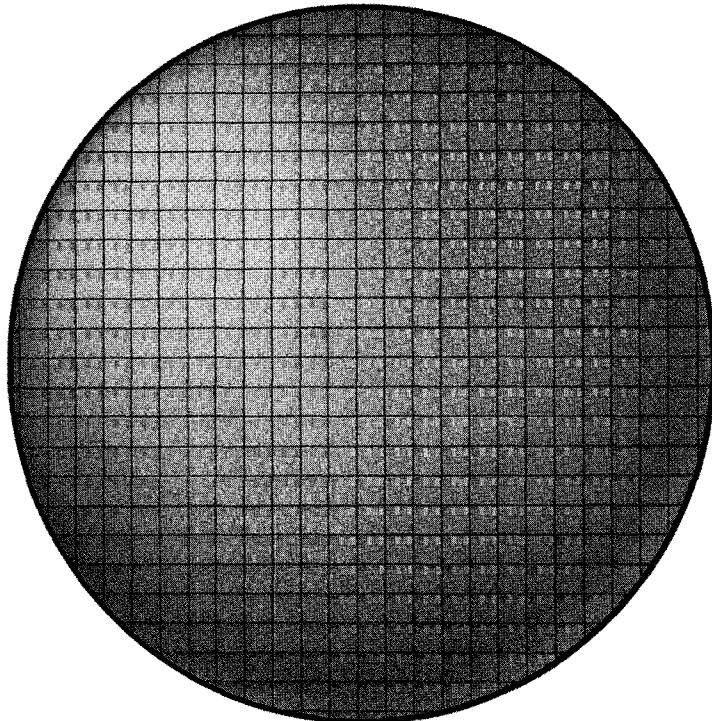
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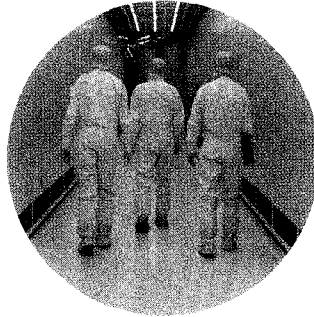
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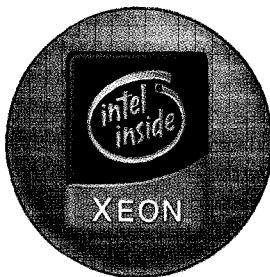


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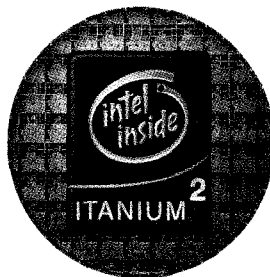
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Soundings: Keats, Raleigh, Lowell, Coleridge, Bishop, Shakespeare, Dickinson read aloud by Stanley Plumly, Henri Cole, Linda Gregerson, Frank Bidart, Peter Davison, Robert Pinsky, Gail Mazur, and many others.

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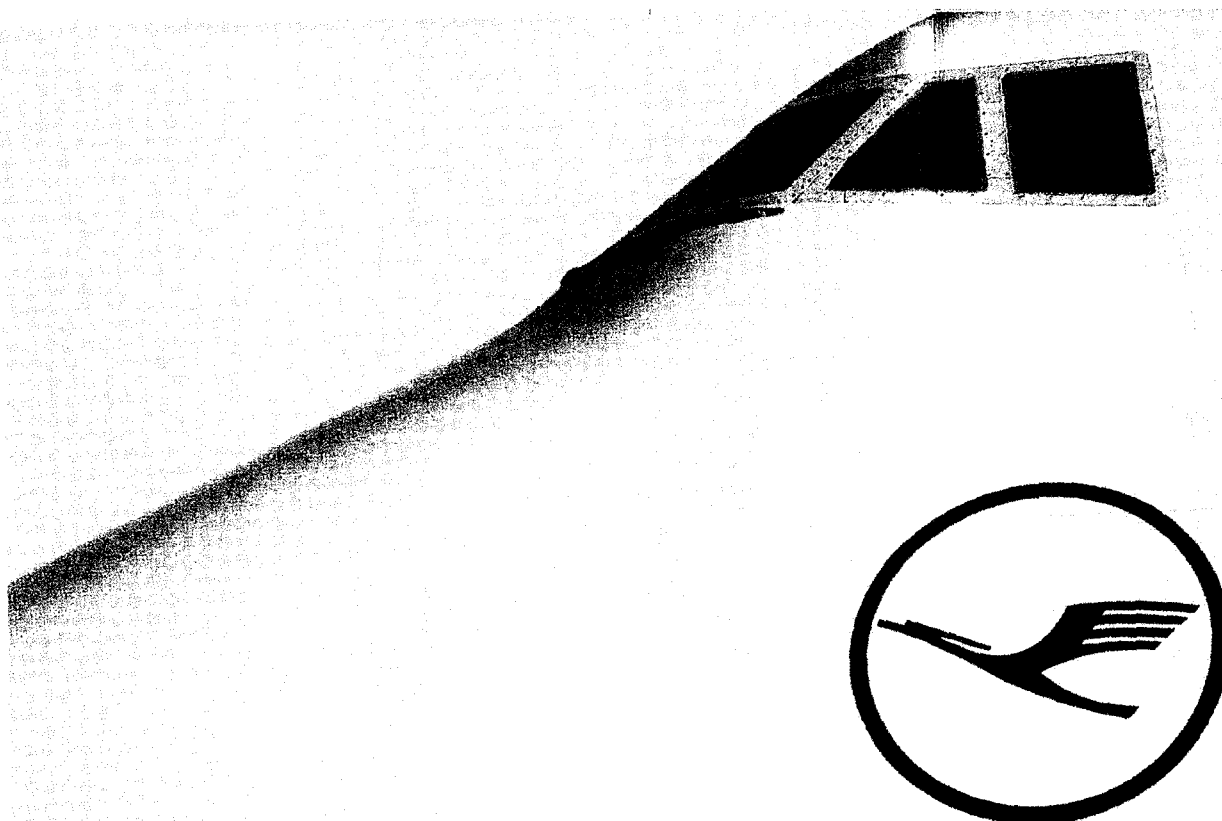
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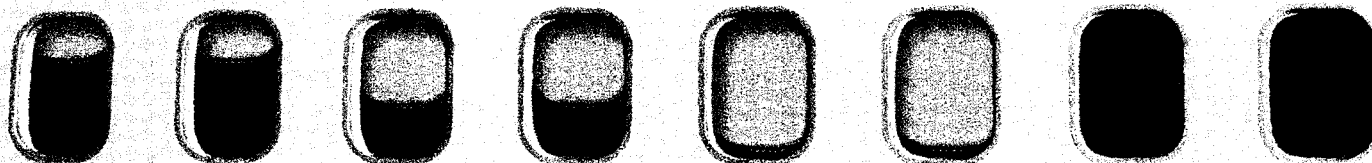
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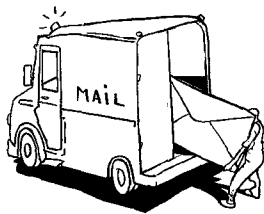
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Brooks on Niebuhr

I want to applaud David Brooks ("A Man on a Gray Horse," *The Agenda*, September *Atlantic*) for reminding us of Reinhold Niebuhr in these troubled times. As one who studied at Union Theological Seminary in the 1960s, I wonder nearly every day (and not just since 9/11) what Niebuhr would say about America's role in the world. Fortunately, he does appear to have influenced writers whose views of the world are not, in Brooks's phrase, "small and wonky." For me that list includes Robert D. Kaplan, E. J. Dionne Jr., and Arthur Schlesinger Jr., among other chastened optimists.

But Brooks deserves one loud cheer instead of three. He mistakenly claims that Niebuhr naively underestimated the human need for zeal, hope, and confidence. To suggest that Niebuhr lacked enough zeal to draw self-centered people into politics ignores the theologian's status on the college circuit as well as on the national scene. The uncomfortable truth is that the inspiring power of love requires the coercive power of justice as an ever-present corrective. The figure whose trenchant analysis of social evil informed the dream of Martin Luther King was scarcely naive about how to engage a society. He just knew that the gains of idealists are short-lived unless and until they can be backed by law. In the 1940s that realism fired up America to do battle with Hitler. In the twenty-first century a comparable Niebuhrian realism would doubtless oppose terrorism, but not without trying to mitigate our complicity in the violence we oppose.

We enact our hopes best when our eyes are fully open.

Richard Crouter
Northfield, Minn.

I found David Brooks's analysis of Reinhold Niebuhr's work to be succinct and accurate save on two points:

1) No student of Niebuhr would ever accuse him of being "naive." The whole thrust of his thought was to combat the naiveté and sentimentalism of both religious and political liberals. The root of this naiveté for Niebuhr was man's fatuous assumption that love of neighbor was a simple human possibility. Niebuhr knew that man's self-interest always distorts his ability to love disinterestedly and to really perceive the needs of his "neighbor," be that neighbor an individual or another nation. Niebuhr defined "sin" as this self-centeredness and in later years expressed regret that he had used the term "sin" instead of "selfishness."

2) Brooks fails to understand Niebuhr's zealous promotion of the need to work for justice and democratic ideals. In his younger years he ran for Congress, and he was a co-founder of Americans for Democratic Action. Niebuhr believed that democracy would not work in a culture where citizens did not audit and chasten their lives by values that transcend self-interest, and he felt that the Judeo-Christian tradition provided such values and, at its best, inspired such self-criticism. The problem is that such ruthless self-criticism is absent from sentimental, self-serving versions of religion, and sentimental religion seems to be the order of the day, from Bush to fundamentalists of all varieties.

Larry A. Jackson
Greenwood, S.C.

Arguing for more moral passion, David Brooks claims, "Slavery would not have ended without the zeal of the abolitionists." How does he know that? My reading of American history suggests that the often arrogant zeal of the abolitionists served mainly to hard-

en slave owners in their moral blindness and make inevitable the Civil War, with its tragic consequences reaching down to the present day. Other contemporaneous slaveholding nations gave up slavery without civil wars. In due time—without the benefit of zealots—might we not also have done the same?

William Schrempp
Billings, Mont.

I have read with interest David Brooks's article on Reinhold Niebuhr, in which Brooks accuses the theologian of lacking idealism when idealism is the creative force of history. "Slavery would not have ended without the zeal of the abolitionists." It is certainly true that for Brooks as for Hegel, great things cannot be accomplished without idealism—the necessary fire that defeats the human inertia that is part of man.

Niebuhr was not against idealism as such but against the idealism removed from the world of reality. As an example, he saw the realization of perfect justice as an illusory idea, but at the same time, he was in favor of "proximate justice," which is vividly expressed in his statement that "the saints are tempted to continue to see that grace may abound, while sinners toil and sweat to make human relations a little more tolerable and slightly more just."

Niebuhr, as a believer in the view that "man is a sinner in his deepest nature," could not bring himself to state that justice, happiness, and perfection are obtainable, though he encouraged the attempt to come close to them. This does not negate idealism, but it gives idealism a quality grounded in reality and not in dreams or illusions.

The theologian also saw in this search for the realization of perfection the effect of human deception: the human deception in thinking that perfect solutions to historical problems



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are within our control. Thus Niebuhr, especially now that the United States is on the brink of taking far-reaching decisions in foreign policy, strikes me as being a profound and cautious guide.

Angelo A. De Gennaro
San Antonio, Tex.

Homeland Insecurity

After reading Charles C. Mann's description of Bruce Schneier's opinions about the application of technology and the importance of human beings in security ("Homeland Insecurity," September *Atlantic*), I was struck by the similarity of his portrait to much of what is wrong with modern medicine. Bureaucrats, managers, lawyers, legislators, most lay persons, and many physicians try to pigeonhole patients in some algorithm that they understand, or anchor them to some statistical analysis they are familiar with. It doesn't work, because each patient is unique, and human judgment must be applied to individual circumstances. One in a million doesn't matter if you are the one.

The computer (and fiber optics) provides us with fabulous new eyes to see and fix human ailments and creates enormous amounts of data about each patient. Nevertheless, an inquiring mind need only ask "Why?" two or three times to again be at the edge of knowledge. Then human judgment, a good brain, and a kind heart must apply multiple algorithms to the one person who matters—the patient with you at that moment.

John R. Dykers Jr.
Siler City, N.C.

Charles Mann makes the important distinction between brittle and ductile security systems: the former are more centralized and subject to significant failure; the latter are compartmentalized and adaptive—a breach in the security of one component does not threaten the entire system. Locks on the doors of airplane cockpits, and passengers willing to take on hijackers, offer ductility, whereas centralized databases of personal information, whether for intelligence or business purposes, do not (in the extreme). I was surprised that Mann did not men-

tion one incredibly ductile system, with which we are currently at war: al Qaeda. Its autonomous-cell organization and generally decentralized command structure make it an excellent example of an adaptable, hard-to-breach system. (Robert Heinlein describes this sort of organization in his novel *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress*.) The U.S. government, with recent efforts to create a centralized Department of Homeland Security, appears to be moving toward increased brittleness (though wrangles over turf might actually forestall some of this). Can we hope to combat al Qaeda's threats with such a move, even in the very long term? In the end we will probably realize that we are left with less security and less freedom. Perhaps we need to work in the opposite direction, as Mann's article implies.

Reed L. Wadley
Columbia, Mo.

Charles Mann makes a very valuable point regarding our national soul-searching on homeland security—namely, that the essential element of a good security system is what the military calls the "Mark I eyeball," the human factor. The cop on the beat, the alert neighbor, the with-it guard, are capable of judgments that can't now be translated into magic hardware fixes, no matter how eager the sales forces of the gadget companies may be.

Incidentally, the points made in this piece were realized long ago by the U.S. military in its nuclear-weapons program. No matter how much a job was suited for technology (being dull, dirty, or dangerous), the military decided explicitly not to take human beings out of the chain. No computer or gadget makes a final choice: under the "two man (person) rule," two separate people have to consent to take action, or nothing happens. For all this time, and through many disasters, the system has worked like a charm.

A couple of things you might add: In the nuclear program you want very high-quality people—people who are screened, checked, watched, trained, oriented—and you need lots of them. This is expensive, and somebody's got to front the dough and the time and the effort. The

*Kevin N. Lewis
The Rand Corporation
Santa Monica, Calif.*

Our management solutions stink: shutting down for three days (thereby causing excessive economic damage); taking all potential weapons from passengers (when the knives used on 9/11 seem to have been planted on the aircraft prior to boarding); and now proposals to centralize security procedures. Our response has been hugely expensive and either useless or counterproductive.

As we have seen, in the instance on 9/11 when an aircraft didn't hit its intended target, passengers made an effective response. Passenger response is what we should work to enhance. It's free, and it is the only thing likely to work.

Brian Hanle
Greenbrae, Calif.

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The Bilbao Effect

Witold Rybczynski's fine article about public competitions for architectural commissions was right on the money ("The Bilbao Effect," September *Atlantic*). Museums in particular are subject to egregious silliness when it comes to the design of new buildings, additions, alterations, and so forth. This is true for two reasons: architects are usually given carte blanche to do what they want, regardless of what is needed, and people who know absolutely nothing about museums think these unique institutions can serve purposes for which they are totally unsuited.

No one can fault architects for taking advantage of opportunities to showcase their talents. But the consequences are often problematic. The East Wing of the National Gallery, in Washington, D.C., provides an excellent example. It is a cold, banal waste of space, with exhibits relegated to obscure corners. This is not unusual. For many current architects of museums, the buildings are more important than what will be seen in them. To make matters worse, the public is given an even lower priority than the contents. Visitors are made to trudge through empty and unattractive spaces, up and down stairs and ramps, while seeking exhibitions, bathrooms, elevators, and exits. The staff members of these new museums often struggle with impractical architectural schemes that in time will prove expensive and troublesome.

Steven H. Miller
Morris Museum
Morristown, N. J.

I agree with Witold Rybczynski, especially with respect to the pictured, and described, planned addition to the Corcoran Gallery of Art, in Washington, D.C. He writes, "Show-dog architecture, especially in a signature style, is unlikely to pay much attention to its surroundings."

The proposed huge scrunch of metal foil could be "interesting" on a hilltop somewhere, but it would be totally out of place near the center of our nation's capital, among very differently designed buildings that reflect our nation's his-

tory. Nor is the proposal comparable to I. M. Pei's addition to the National Gallery of Art, which, although "modern," reasonably fits the Mall scene.

John A. McVickar
Richmond, Va.

Witold Rybczynski's opinions on architecture and his preference for the understated are all fine and good, but in no way do they indict the splendid, the grand, and the spectacular in great buildings. How impoverished the world would be without its most obvious architectural examples of the "wow factor": the pyramids of both Egypt and the Americas, the temples of Luxor and Angkor Wat, the stupendous cathedrals of Europe. Add to these in our time the Sydney Opera House, I. M. Pei's work at the Louvre (and everywhere else), Arthur Erikson's Law Courts in Vancouver, and, indeed, Gehry's great Guggenheim at Bilbao, along with a satisfying list of other candidates, and you have an embodied and stunning counterargument to any notion that such works can be trivialized by reductive name-calling. By his own standards, Rybczynski's use of such phrases as "Look at me," "one-night stands," and "the wow factor" could easily be applied to the Taj Mahal!

How much better and more appropriate it might have been to challenge and decry the desperately tiresome uglification visited on virtually every American city over the past twenty or so years by the stillborn architectural aesthetic of Michael Graves. Why doesn't Rybczynski say what needs to be said?

Barry Herem
Seattle, Wash.

Bucking the Herd

Arthur Allen's "Bucking the Herd" (*The Agenda*, September *Atlantic*) avoids the hard questions on vaccinations. Allen repeats the usual assumptions, taking for granted that the benefits of all vaccines outweigh their risks, and implies that anyone questioning vaccines is misguided and selfish. He reduces an exceedingly complex medical-political-social debate to a simple sound bite: vaccines are good—just say yes.

But the nagging questions remain. Swedish research in 1984 found that the death rate from whooping cough was equally low in all industrialized countries, whether they vaccinated or not. And other research has shown that vaccinated children have two to five times more asthma than unvaccinated children. *The Lancet*, a highly respected medical journal, published research in 1999 showing that in two European Steiner schools—the Swedish counterparts of the Shining Mountain Waldorf School targeted by Allen in his article—only 5.8 percent of the children had asthma, compared with 17 percent of the children in the two control schools. This threefold difference in the asthma rate was attributed to lifestyle differences, including vaccine acceptance. In the only large study in the United States comparing vaccinated with unvaccinated children, Eric L. Hurwitz, of the UCLA School of Public Health, found that children given the DTP or tetanus vaccine had twice as much asthma as unvaccinated children. Several hundred children die each year in the United States from asthma-related problems. What role might vaccinations play in these deaths?

The whole point is that we don't really know if the benefits of the whooping-cough vaccine outweigh its risks for U.S. children today, for the simple reason that no one dares to do the definitive research to find out. Too much is invested in the outcome.

Philip F. Incao, M.D.
Denver, Colo.

As a physician, an employee of a federal regulatory agency, and the father of a child with developmental problems that may have been caused by the mercury used as a preservative in childhood vaccines, I would like to add some perspective to Arthur Allen's article. Opposition to mandatory vaccination, one of Allen's themes, is not new; in fact, anti-vaccine movements are as old as vaccination itself. What is new, and explains why some of today's parents are reluctant to vaccinate their children, is the fact that mercury—a known toxin to the brain—accumulated in vaccines to potentially damaging

levels before regulatory authorities belatedly identified the problem, in 1998. Because vaccine manufacturers, astonishingly enough, had no evidence, even from animal studies, that the amount of mercury present in the routine childhood vaccine schedule was safe, they had little recourse but to reduce or eliminate the mercury in their vaccines.

This remedial action was too little too late, however. When an august body of scientists assembled by the U.S. Institute of Medicine concluded that the mercury present in childhood vaccines could have caused neurodevelopmental disorders, including autistic spectrum disorders (conditions far more devastating than measles, mumps, or whooping cough), parents' confidence in vaccine safety was predictably and justifiably shaken. In the wake of the mercury debacle, some parents, unsurprisingly, have opted against routine vaccination.

Eric Colman
Baltimore, Md.

Arthur Allen unfairly insinuates that a single alternative school and alternative health care are solely responsible for the endemic nature of pertussis in Boulder. No doubt about it, pertussis is a nasty and scary illness to have or to witness. Certainly, both conventional and alternative measures are necessary to keep this disease and others under control. But Allen neglects other factors specific to Boulder and endemic disease, such as a highly transient population (be it college students, tourists, or illegal immigrants), terrible air pollution, and Boulder's arid climate and high altitude, which makes tender lung tissue more susceptible to infection.

P. Lynch
Upper Black Eddy, Pa.

Arthur Allen replies:

My article was conceived as an inquiry into the ecology of a non-vaccinating community, and was not intended to brand all who resist vaccination as selfish or misguided. People in Colorado and other states have the

legal right to decide that the risk-benefit ratio favors non-vaccination. But I don't think it's unreasonable to reflect on the impact of their actions. As P. Lynch points out, not every pertussis germ in Colorado has been traced to the Shining Mountain School. But case histories and epidemiological data clearly point to Boulder, and Shining Mountain in particular, as the site of the original outbreak. The evidence that Philip Incao presents to raise questions about the benefits of vaccination is very selective. He omits larger studies in Sweden, Finland, New Zealand, and Britain that found no linkage between vaccination and asthma, or found that children who get whooping cough are more likely to become asthmatic. A body of research indicates that certain bacterial proteins stimulate the immune system to prevent the development of an allergic response, but this "hygiene hypothesis" is quite complex and contested. Does Dr. Incao really believe that the return of free-roaming whooping cough would improve the health of Americans? As for Eric Colman, I agree that the public-health authorities are at fault for failing to take action, or perhaps even to notice the tiny

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but theoretically dangerous levels of ethyl mercury in vaccines sooner. This will be all the more infuriating if research bolsters the argument that vaccinal mercury caused an increase in autism. Alternatively, if the theory fails, the removal of mercury might be interpreted as emblematic of the care taken to make sure vaccines are safe. It is hard to weigh known ills, such as vaccine-preventable diseases, against evils that are speculative but potentially much worse, especially given the difficulty of predicting the point at which herd immunity will fail and serious diseases will return. But non-vaccination is risky, and that's what this article was about.

More on Ansel Adams

Kenneth Brower's review of "Ansel Adams at 100," in your July/August issue, is misguided and inaccurate. It is also meanspirited toward an art curator, and a mischaracterization of the curator's catalogue essay.

I first met Ansel Adams in 1970—some years after Brower, as a nineteen-year-old, was acquainted with him. A year later I became his first and only business manager. Since 1975 I have served as a trustee of the trust Adams established to maintain the integrity of his work and to continue its publication. Although I spent seven years of this period in Washington, D.C., as the chief executive of The Wilderness Society, my association with Adams during the last thirteen years of his life, and with his work in the eighteen years since, has been both intimate and continuous.

Among the misconceptions inscribed upon Brower's youthful mind, and presented to us as gospel nearly forty years later: that Adams was a nocturnal "sybarite" whose "regimen had left him with a paunch and had compromised his health, delicate since childhood." This characterization would surely astonish those adults who actually knew him. Ansel Adams was the hardest-working and most productive human being I have ever known. He climbed mountains, traveled the country tirelessly, made 40,000 photographs, gave hundreds of lectures, taught myriad workshops, made a living as a commercial photographer—and devoted nearly half of his time to environmental activism.

He wrote more than three dozen books, along with hundreds of articles and essays. He wrote more than 100,000 letters and notes, and personally printed more than 10,000 photographs in his darkroom. He worked seven days a week, never taking vacations, until he was eighty. It is impossible to imagine such activity in a person of "compromised health." Ditto for the notion of "delicate since childhood."

Brower says that John Szarkowski "perpetuates some myths" about Adams as "a [financially] struggling artist until late in life." Well, Brower is wrong. At age seventy, after fifty years of phenomenally hard work, Adams and his wife, Virginia, had no savings or investments other than some shares of Eastman Kodak stock that Virginia had inherited. They had no retirement fund other than Social Security. The cottage in Yosemite of which Brower speaks was owned by the National Park Service. Their Carmel residence was bought with the proceeds from the sale of his home in San Francisco supplemented by a gift of land and a loan from a generous former student. Adams's correspondence, at the University of Arizona, readily reveals his unceasing concern throughout his career about making the next mortgage payment or the next tuition payment or financing a photography trip. He lived, literally, from assignment to assignment.

Brower says, "By 1964, when I roomed in the Carmel house, Adams was getting a yearly retainer of \$75,000 from Polaroid for just fooling around in his spare time with the company's cameras and film." In reality, Adams was paid \$12,000 per annum as Polaroid's principal photographic consultant! And he wasn't just "fooling around." He was a close and regular adviser to Edwin Land. He wrote some 4,000 technical memoranda for Polaroid—often lengthy and based on considerable research and testing.

In the context of wondering about the choice of John Szarkowski as curator, Brower declares that "MOMA was anathema to Adams." If so, then why did Adams select the museum—and John Szarkowski—for what he believed to be one of the three most important exhibitions of his career (MOMA 1979)?

If so, then why did he and Virginia, on his seventy-fifth birthday, create and endow the Newhall Curatorial Fellowship at MOMA? The initial gift of \$250,000 represented a significant part of Adams's net worth at a time when he had barely become financially secure. It was also a virtually unprecedented step for a major artist—to actually make a substantial cash donation to a museum.

Brower repeatedly criticizes Szarkowski for his failure to include mural-sized prints (twenty or more square feet) in the exhibition. And Brower repeatedly invokes his "inside" knowledge of Adams's passion for exhibiting these huge prints. Wrong again. Adams would not have included such prints in his centennial exhibition. For a limited period he made mural-sized prints for commercial clients—and from time to time one or several were included in exhibitions (particularly the "Eloquent Light" exhibition of 1963 that so transfixed Brower). But he came to feel that the prints distracted the serious viewer by their very size. More spectacle than art. He also felt that print

quality—absolutely central to his work—deteriorated at such high magnification. John Szarkowski set out to show Adams's best prints—not his biggest.

*William A. Turnage
The Ansel Adams Trust
Mill Valley, Calif.*

Kenneth Brower replies:

William Turnage may be right that Polaroid paid Ansel Adams \$12,000 a year as a consultant, and not \$75,000. I remember hearing that higher figure twice in conversation with Adams in the early 1960s, but memory is notoriously unreliable, and forty years is indeed a long time. I'm grateful to Turnage for the clarification. In all his other objections, however, he is wrong.

Turnage makes much of the fact that he knew Adams well, whereas I knew him hardly at all. In fact I knew Adams from my infancy to the time I saw him off at his memorial. (I did not make his acquaintance at nineteen, as Turnage's careless reading of my story suggests.) Turnage did not meet Adams until two decades after the photographer had become a creative burnout—if

we are to believe John Szarkowski's evaluation in the exhibit catalogue that Turnage defends. Turnage does not like the word "sybarite," but Adams was one. Artists often are. He drank and talked and partied hard. Anyone who knew Adams after six in the evening would laugh at Turnage's assertion.

Adams did have lifelong troubles with his health. Not one of his biographers has failed to mention the breathing problems and nightmares of early childhood, the pre-adolescent illness that forced him from a career as a pianist into photography, the nervous breakdown at mid-career, the persistent heart troubles in the second half of his life. By middle age he was indeed out of shape, and often lamented it. Again, his prodigious accomplishments are all the more remarkable for his bouts of bad health. As for Adams's deeply troubled, up-and-down relationship with MOMA, all his biographers refer to it, as do his letters. In old age, happily, he reached a rapprochement with MOMA, but that doesn't negate the anguish of his youthful relations with the museum.

Adams, the struggling artist of Turnage's account, owned one of the most magnificent

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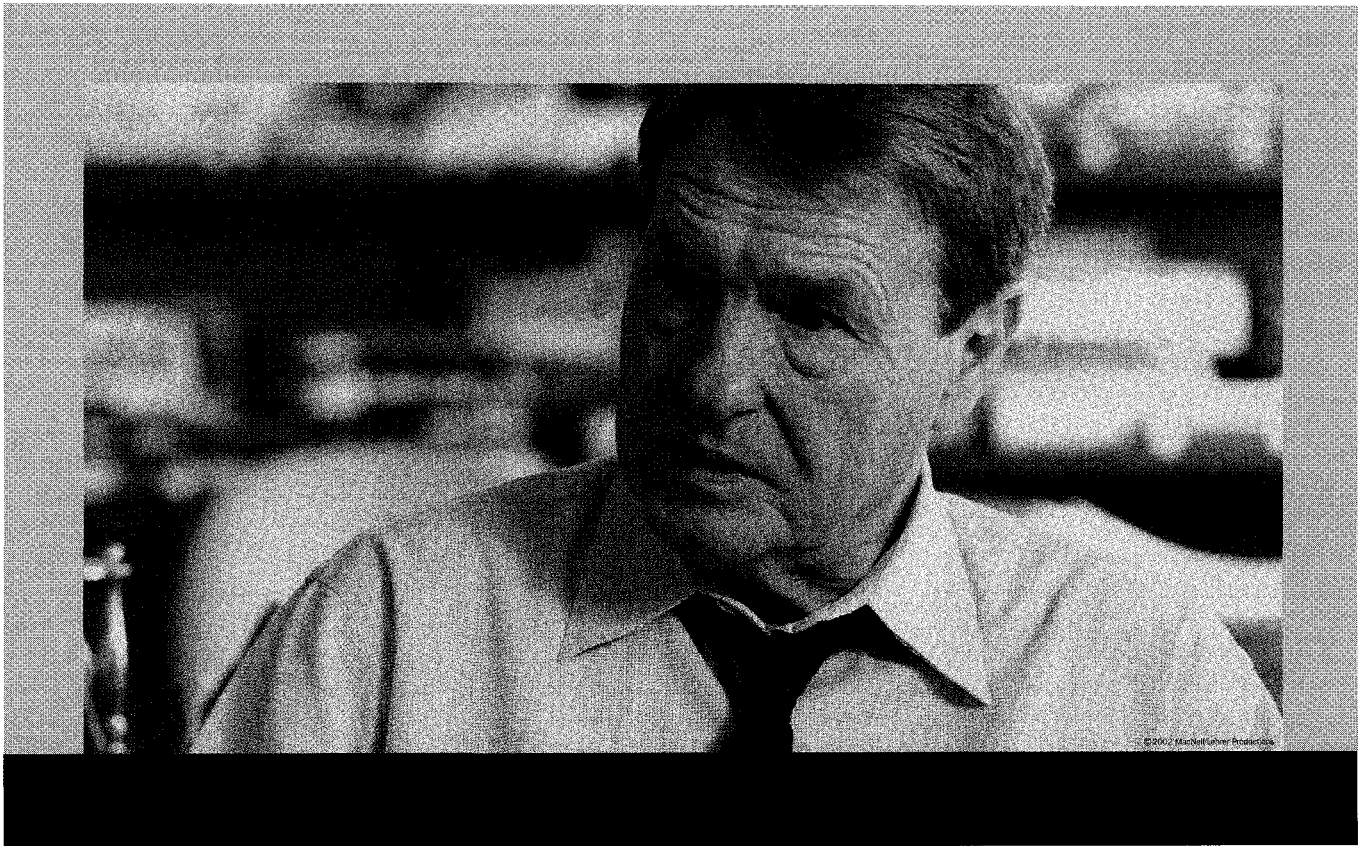
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houses I have ever seen, perched above a stretch of the most magnificent coast on the planet, and he entertained extravagantly there. He worried about money, like most of us, but he was never the sort of fellow reduced to roasting pigeons over a candle in his garret.

Turnage has decided that in my objection to the absence of "large" prints in John Szarkowski's exhibit I meant "mural-sized" and "huge." What I meant was "large." I agree with Turnage that Adams's mural-sized prints got too big. I did not miss those. What I missed in "Ansel Adams at 100" was prints I did not have to squint at.

Big Sur Digs

Barbara Wallraff used many superlatives to describe her visit to Big Sur ("The Romance of Big Sur," September *Atlantic*), including justifiably choice ones about her stay at the grand Post Ranch Inn. However, Wallraff neglected to mention the Post Ranch's alarmingly prohibitive rates: as of June 1, 2002, accommodations ranged from \$675 to \$975 a night. A description of viable alternatives, including Big Sur's fine nearby campgrounds and motels, would have been of more practical use.

Craig Arnott
Carmel, Calif.

Barbara Wallraff replies:

Overpriced resorts appall me, too, but I recommended the Post Ranch Inn as a high-end place that gives guests good value for their dollar. And the article both discussed the much less expensive Big Sur Inn and pointed readers toward the Big Sur Chamber of Commerce Web site, where all the area's lodging possibilities are listed.

Advice & Consent

Margaret Talbot ("True Confessions," The Agenda, July/August *Atlantic*) takes us on a harrowing ride through the historical and present-day problems our judicial system has in sending innocent people to prison and death row. Yet she failed to address two issues: First, how many of the death-row cases overturned by DNA evidence sparked new investigations? Practically none. The prosecutors and the police in

almost every case were so bent on keeping the conviction at all costs that even after the cases were overturned they refused to consider the possibility that the crime had been committed by "someone else." And second, prosecutors from different counties in Texas had reams of DNA evidence from old cases destroyed after a Texas inmate won his release through DNA testing.

Robert L. Williford Jr.
Tucker, Ariz.

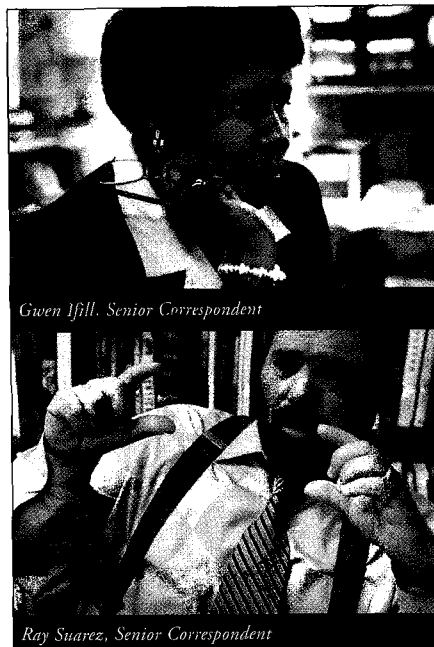
I would like to commend Lawrence Weschler on his excellent article "The Jewel of Poland" (July/August *Atlantic*). However, though the paragraph on the salt mines outside Kraków is poetic, the words "workhorses were winched down steep shafts, never to see the light of day again" are inaccurate. For the past five months I have been an international student at the Warsaw School of Economics, and I participated in a study tour at the Jagiellonian University, in Kraków. Unless the English-speaking guide with twenty years' experience was lying to me and my classmates, the horses "winched down steep shafts" were brought to the surface for one day each month. Otherwise they would have become blind, owing to the lack of exposure to light, and thus useless for work in the underground chambers.

Ashley Maynor
Knoxville, Tenn.

All good twenty-fifth-birthday wishes for the Emily Cox-Henry Rathvon Puzzler! In addition to the many pleasant hours it has given me, I have a special reason for gratitude for its existence. Ten years ago I had brain surgery to remove a large, benign tumor. Though assured by the neurosurgeon after the operation that I would have no "intellectual deficit," I did not relax until I had called for, and completed, the most recent *Atlantic* Puzzler.

Some time later I mentioned this to a colleague (I am a physics professor). He laughed, and told me that under similar circumstances he had set for himself, and passed, the same test.

J. D. Memory
Cary, N.C.



Ray Suarez, Senior Correspondent

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INNOCENT BYSTANDER

by CULLEN MURPHY

MY WAY

*Getting in touch with your inner
Turkmenbashi*

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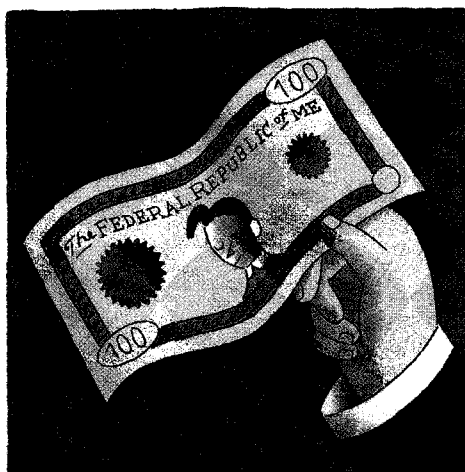
Saparmurat Niyazov, the President of Turkmenistan, knows himself to be a man of destiny. He need only whisper, and hideous confections of marble and gold leaf rise above the souks of his capital, Ashkhabad. He has adopted the honorific Turkmenbashi, meaning "Great Leader of All Turkmen." His face appears on the currency of his desert nation, and on its bottles of vodka and packages of tea. He has introduced a line of cologne. Last summer the President proposed, and the parliament agreed, that the month of January would be named Turkmenbashi. October would be named Rukhnama, meaning "spiritual revival," after the title of Turkmenbashi's collection of philosophical musings, which enjoys a compulsory vogue. April would be known as Gurbansoltan, after the mother of the Great Leader of All Turkmen.

As you might imagine, Turkmenbashi's actions have gotten attention. Shirali Nurmuradov, a poet and one of Turkmenistan's few dissidents, who now lives in Sweden, recently told a *New York Times* reporter, "There is a saying in our country: 'There is a limit to wisdom, but there is no limit to foolishness.'" Coverage of Turkmenbashi in the West has of course been smug and patronizing, as though the same thing could not happen here. (Imagine if Indiana, say, suddenly came under the suzerainty of Donald Trump.)

Missing in all the commentary is any candid acknowledgment that Saparmurat Niyazov's actions strike a universal chord. We all possess an inner Turkmenbashi. It is the part of us that yearns to be the absolute ruler of some sovereign state, no matter how pitiful;

the part that yearns to pepper conversation with references to "my people," or to achieve weight loss simply by changing one's portrait on coins.

It used to be that acquiring a country of one's own was a career option open to virtually any tribal warlord. World governance has since congealed into about two hundred nation-states, with new ones coming on the market very infrequently. (The last big yard sale occurred after the collapse of the Soviet Union.) But opportunities for carving out zones of autonomy still exist



in unsettled parts of the world, and attempts are made even in the more established precincts. The boroughs of Queens and Staten Island have at various times tried to secede from New York City. In 1980 nine counties in southern New Jersey launched an understandable but ill-fated separatist campaign. In 1997 Italy's Northern League promoted a referendum to express the desire of northern Italians to form a breakaway Republic of Padania.

The impulse to bring forth a new nation manifests itself in a variety of ways. It has motivated vast amounts of literature, though the boundary between imagination and reality is not always

clear. Jorge Luis Borges's short story "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" involves the ancient civilization of Uqbar, which originated in a fictitious entry insinuated into a real encyclopedia but gradually went on to acquire a semblance of reality on the authority of the initial printed reference. Several years ago an advertisement appeared in *The Economist* announcing the formation of a mini-state to be known as Laissez Faire City, which would be governed according to the "ideals and principles" laid down in Ayn Rand's 1957 book *Atlas Shrugged*. The persistent hold of Rand's Objectivist philosophy must not be underestimated. In a 1991 survey by the Library of Congress and the Book of the Month Club, which asked readers to name books that had "made a difference" in their lives, *Atlas Shrugged* came in second, after the Bible. The book describes a libertarian community in Colorado called Galt's Gulch, a redoubt of "rational selfishness" and absolute free-market capitalism. According to the notice in *The Economist*, the founding fathers of Laissez Faire City sought to lease a hundred square miles of territory,

most likely in Central America, where they could make Galt's Gulch a reality—creating an economically autonomous entity free of taxes, tariffs, and the intrusions of big government. So far Laissez Faire City remains a Web site, as does another Ayn Rand derivative—the principality of New Utopia, which is envisioned as a Waterworld-like platform on the high seas.

The Web, of course, is irresistible territory to a latter-day Cecil Rhodes, and the Scramble for Cyberia is the modern analogue of the nineteenth-century Scramble for Africa. There's a cyberland called Absurdistan, which is satirical, and another called the Lunar

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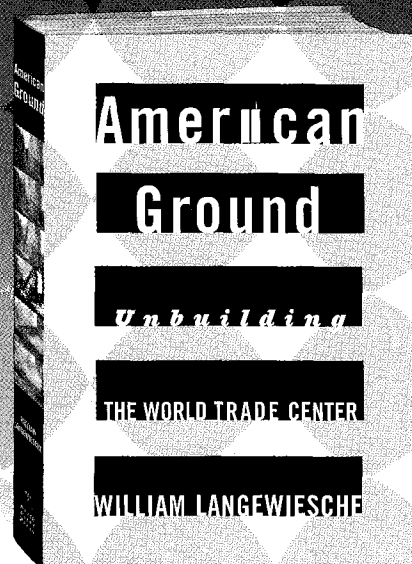
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Republic, which sells real estate on the moon. In 1995 the rogue bishop Jacques Gaillot was stripped of his French diocese, in Evreux, and exiled by the Vatican to the diocese of Partenia, in Algeria. Partenia no longer exists as an inhabited place (it's a ruin in the sands), but the Vatican keeps hundreds of defunct ancient dioceses on the books, mostly as way stations for bishops awaiting the call to living communities but also as repositories for the odd problem case. The entrepreneurial Bishop Gaillot, though, turned Partenia into a bully pulpit: he created a cyberdiocese, with a chat room, an electronic catechism, and an archive of sermons. His is now a voice crying from the wilderness, at www.partenia.org.

Conjuring a micro-nation or a cyber-realm or a fictional domain has obvious appeal, but it pales beside holding sway over the real thing. The psychic satisfaction derived from status as the crown prince of New Utopia may be considerable, but who would not trade up for even the modest earthly powers wielded by the commoner Turkmenbashi?

Turkmenbashi has endured sniping for kitschy excess. But, if anything, he can be faulted for exercising restraint. He has so far contented himself with cosmetic alterations and a cult of personality, while amassing a fortune in natural-gas revenues. Absent is the social engineering that would have tempted a truly visionary leader. The world's many presidents-without-portfolio, like myself, can only shake our heads in sadness at the missed opportunities.

If I were in the Great Leader's shoes, with the task of calendrical reform now behind me, I'd be thinking of a more ambitious agenda. One key item would be to make time zones horizontal instead of vertical. This runs counter to the diurnal motion of the planet, to be sure, but at a stroke it would solve the problem of Turkmenistan's remoteness from anyplace you'd actually want to be. Thus the capital Ashkhabad, instead of being fully half a day ahead of New York, with all the logistical problems this entails, would now be in the same time zone.

I would also do something about my

people's accent. There are tutors these days who can work wonders—like Sam Chwat, speech therapist to the stars, who specializes in accent elimination and dialect acquisition. It was Chwat who endowed Robert De Niro with an Appalachian accent for *Cape Fear*. It was Chwat who removed most traces of the South from the voice of Andie MacDowell. Right now everyone in Central Asia sounds like a Manhattan cabbie, but a little bit of effort could bring the level up to that of a Peter Jennings if not a Noël Coward. That way, when a Turkmen called for reservations at Elaine's, the maitre d' would not ask suspiciously, "Are you calling from Turkmenistan?" but would say, "Of course, Mr. Plimpton."

A true mark of leadership used to be endowing your people with a new alphabet and making them adopt the religion you'd just been converted to. No world leader has done either of these things in years. A bolder Turkmenbashi would seek a replacement for the Cyrillic and Latin scripts. The Elvish alphabets from *The Lord of the Rings* have a striking aesthetic quality, and would enliven the peeling façades of Ashkhabad. And could Quakerism have a future in Central Asia? Conspicuously soft on *jihad*, this may be one form of theocracy that would not deter Western investors.

Finally, a Turkmenbashi worthy of the name would take steps to create a "usable past"—that is, to invent a noble national mythos for history-short Turkmenistan. Doing so is nothing to be ashamed of: every successful country has made up significant parts of its history, even when it had vast amounts of the real stuff close to hand. Large portions of Scotland's venerable tartan "tradition" were invented out of whole cloth. The French version of World War II is still in rewrite. Turkmenistan needs a stirring new version of its past. It could begin with the arrival of the Quaker hordes. It should be sure to mention the stopover by Borges, on his return from Uqbar. And it might make reference to the verses that all Turkmen children learn to recite, which begin, "Gurban-soltan is the cruelest month . . ." ▀

Cullen Murphy is The Atlantic's managing editor.



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THE AGENDA

THIS MONTH, essays on snobbery for everyone, the motives of politicians, and a West divided.

DAVID BROOKS

"We have democratized elitism in this country. There is no longer a clear pecking order, with the Vanderbilts and the Biddles and the Roosevelts at the top and everybody else down below. Everybody gets to be an aristocrat now."

PAGE 32

P. J. O'ROURKE

"In general Americans regard the politician as a type of celebrity falling somewhere between NPR commentator and soap-opera supporting actress."

PAGE 34

RANKING THE MOVIE PRESIDENTS

"The historian David M. Kennedy calls Merkin Muffley (Dr. Strangelove) 'a pathetically moralizing do-gooder who dithered away a matchless opportunity to end the Cold War and the Soviet Union with a single bold stroke.'" PAGE 38

CHARLES A. KUPCHAN

"Not only is American primacy far less durable than it appears, but it is already beginning to diminish. And the rising challenger is not China or the Islamic world but the European Union." PAGE 42

PRIMARY SOURCES

"Women unhappy in their marriages often enter full-time employment as an escape. But although a woman's entrance into the workplace does tend to increase the stability of her marriage, it does not increase her happiness." PAGE 45

THE NATION IN NUMBERS

"After 9/11 some commentators expressed hope that a strong civic response to the terrorist attacks might begin to reverse forty years of falling political engagement. That hasn't happened." PAGE 48

WHAT NOW?

Developments, encouraging and otherwise

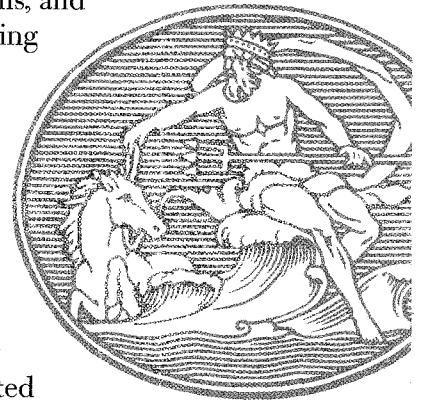
BY MICHAEL KELLY

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All autumns have a return-to-reality quality to them, and this one especially so. The season inevitably revolved around September 11, the first anniversary of the most lethal attack against Americans in America since the War of 1812. There must have been tens of thousands of individual community and religious ceremonies across the country, so presumably a lot of mediocre speeches were delivered, but the network television coverage, which is how we experience events on a national level, featured little mediocre speechmaking, and, astonishingly and wonderfully, the anchors to a great degree let the day speak for itself. The effect was to force one back to the raw fact of what happened a year ago.

The day before the anniversary Susan Sontag, writing in *The New York Times* and exhibiting all the sensitivity and intelligence that have graced her previous utterances on this subject, sniffed that real wars did not require commemorations, and that the fact that there would be events marking September 11 proved that what we were in now was only a "pseudo-war." The core of the commemoration in New York was the reading of the names of the murdered by family members and other speakers standing on a stage in front of the pit of what used to be the World Trade Center. They read all 2,801 names, and CBS, which was what I watched, showed for almost every one of the dead a photograph, the name printed out, and the age at death. The cameras broadcast the scene as families made their way down a ramp into the pit to lay flowers on the ground, and to mourn for a while. The litany took several hours, which provided ample time to contemplate the dimensions of suffering involved in the crime that began the war that Ms. Sontag regards as pseudo. So many dead, so many lives blighted, so much weeping. Some pseudo.

In the non-pseudo world September was the month in which it dawned that the next real war—the one with Iraq—was almost certainly going to happen. August had been an excellent month for pretending otherwise. President Bush had spent the summer mostly at his ranch in Texas. The press had passed the time hyping all the reasons why there couldn't, or wouldn't, or at least shouldn't, be a



war: Europe was against it; Russia was against it; the Arab states were against it; Bush's own Secretary of State was against it; Bush's aged father was against it (or at least his aged father's aged ex-advisers were); the American public was increasingly dubious; no one had consulted Congress or the United Nations, and in any event no support would be found there either.

Then, in very short order, a number of things happened. The Bush Administration pulled its act together and marched out first the Vice President and then the Secretaries of State and Defense and then the President himself to argue the case for war. Prime Minister Tony Blair, of Great Britain, hardened his support for "regime change"—by force if necessary. President Jacques Chirac, of France, unexpectedly softened his opposition to same, suggesting that France would support a UN resolution authorizing war if America first supported a resolution demanding Iraqi compliance with immediate and unrestricted weapons inspections and if Iraq failed to meet that demand. The White House at last acted on the need for formal congressional and, if possible, UN support for war.

The respected and independent International Institute for Strategic Studies issued a report on Iraq's military capabilities, which concluded that the development of weapons of mass destruction was the "core objective" of Saddam's regime; that the regime had pursued this goal for eleven years, in violation of the 1991 Gulf War ceasefire and various UN resolutions; and that Iraq possessed extensive stocks of biological weapons, significant chemical weapons, and a nuclear program sufficient to allow it to produce a "wild-card" Hiroshima-level bomb "in a matter of months" if it can manage to get its hands on enough black-market fissile material.

Taken together, these developments suggested a new reckoning of realities that could lead to both UN and con-

gressional support for war. The Bush Administration had come to accept the fact that war without at least some level of both international and domestic support was, if not unthinkable, at least undesirable. But as the French proposal made clear, international support was achievable—provided the U.S. government signed on to a last-gasp effort to force Iraq into compliance with UN resolutions. This procedural compromise, which rests on the reasonable assumption that Saddam will fail to comply with the last-gasp demand and will thereby, in effect, green-light his own destruction, will be coupled with a more refined legal, practical, and moral argument for war, the basis of which is suggested by the IISS report.

Bush made the new argument reasonably well in an address to the United Nations on September 12. Previously the Administration had suggested that Saddam's regime posed an immediate threat to American lives and that it was complicit in al Qaeda's efforts. The former may be true, but it is hard to prove. The evidence for the latter has eluded searchers. Now Bush instead stated that "our greatest fear is that terrorists will find a shortcut to their mad ambitions when an outlaw regime supplies them with the technologies to kill on a massive scale." Undeniable. And Iraq, Bush argued, was the "one regime" that was likely to do that. Saddam's regime has a history of using weapons of mass destruction in war, and had even used them against Iraqis. Because of this singular history, the UN had in 1991 forced Saddam to agree to a series of mandatory resolutions whereby he would renounce support for terrorism, destroy all stocks of weapons of mass destruction, and submit to unfettered UN inspections to ensure compliance. As Bush noted, actually understating the case, Iraq had broken all these promises, defied all these resolutions, and in general "unilaterally subverted" the commands of "the world's most important multilateral

body." (A nice bit of reverse spin on "unilateral" and "multilateral" there.) And by the way, Bush noted, Iraq had also defied the will of the UN and broken the peace when, in 1993, it "attempted to assassinate the Emir of Kuwait and a former American President" (the latter also known as "my dad").

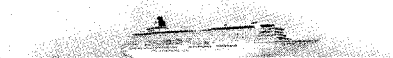
"All the world now faces a test and the United Nations a difficult and defining moment," Bush said. "Are Security Council resolutions to be honored and enforced, or cast aside without consequence? Will the United Nations serve the purpose of its founding, or will it be irrelevant?" He summed up by agreeing to work with the UN on a new, last resolution to give Iraq a chance to come into compliance with the previous resolutions—which is all, actually, that the UN was asking for. If that fails (as Bush knows it must), the United States will go to war—with or without the blessing of the UN.

With this, the U.S. government closed the case on the essential question of war against Iraq: "Should we?" Yes, we should, and all together now, said the newly multilateralist President. One way or another, the debate ended on September 12, at least as far as practical politics is concerned.

What remained after "Should we?" was not "Will we win?"—that is as near to a given as one gets in war—but everything else. There will be a war, and there will be an American victory, and then there will be a postwar. Bush's father never gave his own postwar reality sufficient thought, and so unleashed the intolerable danger his son must now address (although the son is too observant of filial respect to say so). It is this—the postwar, the promise that this time we will think it through to the end—that the second President Bush must address, publicly, explicitly, convincingly. He made, and will win, the argument for war. He must make, and win, the case for a peace that can survive the week after the war. ■

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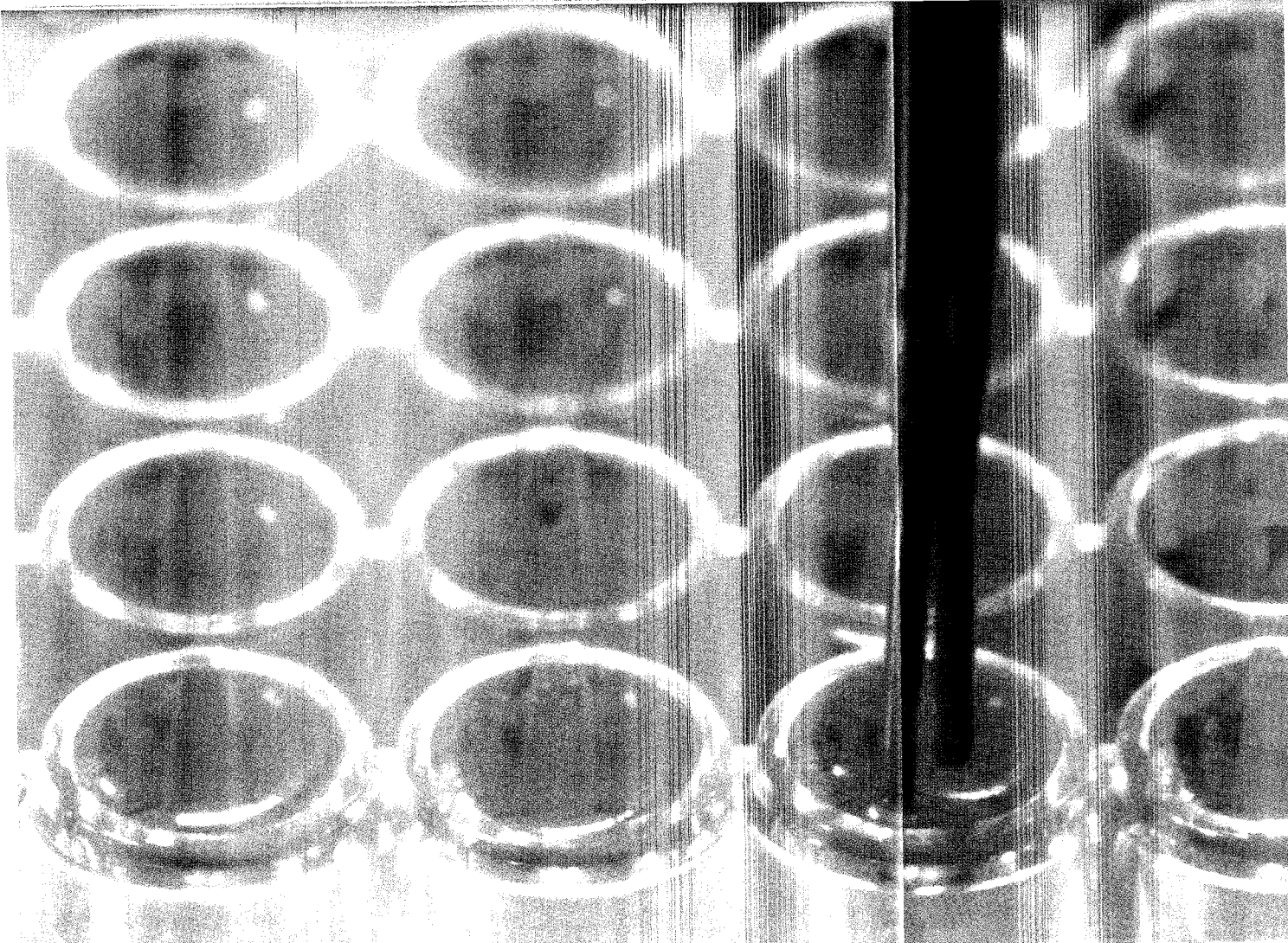
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SUPERIORITY COMPLEX

We have democratized elitism in this country. Now everybody can be a snob

Know thyself," the Greek sage advised. But of course this is nonsense. Truly happy people live by the maxim "Overrate thyself." They are raised by loving parents who slather them with praise. They stride through life with a confidence built on an amazing overestimation of their own abilities. And they settle into an old age made comfortable by the warm glow of self-satisfaction. Each of these people is a god of self-esteem, dwelling on a private Olympus.

Imagine two of these gods meeting at a nursery-school parents' social. She is an anthropologist at a community college and chairs the local globalization study seminar. He is an upper-level executive who was recently named Payroll Person of the Year by the West Coast Regional Payroll Professionals Association.

She appears before him with her Tibetan-motif dangly earrings, Andrea Dworkin-inspired hairstyle, peasant blouse, and open-toed sandals (left-wing activists of a certain bent have a strange tendency toward toe exhibitionism). She has constructed a life that "validates" her at every turn. Her Working Assets cell-phone rate plan, her yeast-free spelt bread, and her membership in the Chain Store Boycott League all remind her of her enlightened values and commitment to social justice.

Her accomplishments are really quite impressive. Her journal essay on Latino urban quilting generated intense discussion in the field. She is by far the best outdoorswoman in the Georgia O'Keeffe Hiking Club. She has a reputation in her circle as something of a salad connoisseur, and her views on progressive bluegrass festivals are sought by people she barely knows. In short, she can enter any room aware that she is a person of consequence.

Unlike the anthropologist, the payroll man does not live the sort of lifestyle that is unimaginable without futons. He has never once wanted to free Mumia, or had any views whatsoever concern-

ing Mumia; he doesn't even know who Mumia is. He is more interested in college football and tassels. His loafers have tassels. His golf bag has tassels. If he could put tassels around the Oklahoma-football vanity plate on his Porsche, his life would be complete.

IDEAS
**DAVID
BROOKS**

At the parents' social he is a bit disconcerted, because he's not used to socializing in a room that doesn't have a wet bar. Nonetheless, he, too, has constructed a life that reinforces and magnifies his self-esteem at every

turn. Every piece of plastic in his wallet reminds him of his own significance. His American Express card is platinum, his United Airlines frequent-flyer award level is Premier Executive, his Hilton Honors category is Deity.

His watch is wafer-thin. He is always the favorite in closest-to-the-pin contests at resort-hotel motivational conferences. Yet his greatest source of pride is that he, like most American men, considers himself a master of transportation. He knows a secret parking spot close to the entrance of his local airport. Every bag he owns is on wheels, for easy maneuverability. He has memorized his seven frequent-flyer numbers, and he never, ever sets off the metal detectors. He knows which Boeing models have the widest emergency aisles (for extra legroom) and which first-class lounges offer the best mimosas. He glides through his travels infinitely more knowledgeably than the queued-up mortals around him.

When these two impressive individuals meet at the hors d'oeuvres table, they naturally detest each other. The anthropologist secretly reflects that whereas her four-year-old can sing the entire alphabet song, can identify six of the first ten numerals, and was clearly the most promising student in the Parent-Toddler Poetry Workshop, Mr. Payroll's little boy spends all day on the ground staring at toy-truck wheels. Mr. Payroll is thinking that whereas his little guy is so mature that he leads the class in tearless

morning drop-offs, the anthropologist's girl sobs hysterically and clings to her mother's legs as if she were being abandoned to the Khmer Rouge whenever her mother tries to kiss her good-bye.

Despite their feelings of mutual contempt, the two manage to have a pleasant conversation, mostly about the wonderfulness of the nursery school they have selected for their kids. Then they retreat to their respective cultural klatches feeling greatly superior to the person they have just left behind.

We have democratized elitism in this country. There is no longer a clear pecking order, with the Vanderbilts and the Biddles and the Roosevelts at the top and everybody else down below. Everybody gets to be an aristocrat now. And the number of social structures is infinite. You can be an outlaw-biker aristocrat, a corporate-real-estate aristocrat, an X Games aristocrat, a Pentecostal-minister aristocrat. You will have your own code of honor and your own field of accomplishment. And everybody can be a snob, because everybody can look down from the heights of his mountain-top at those millions of poor saps who are less accomplished in the field of, say, skateboard jumping, or who are total poseurs when it comes to financial instruments, or who are sadly backward when it comes to social awareness or the salvation of their own souls.

Communications technology has expanded the cultural space. We now have thousands of specialized magazines, newsletters, and Web sites catering to every social, ethnic, religious, and professional clique. You can construct your own multimedia community, in which every magazine you read, every cable show you watch, every radio station you listen to, reaffirms your values and reinforces the sense of your own rightness. It is possible, maybe even inevitable, that you will slide into a solipsism that allows you precious little contact with people totally unlike yourself. But in your enclosed sphere you will feel very important.

This is not all bad: in this segmented world everybody gets to be successful. If, like me, you believe that human beings are motivated primarily by a desire for recognition, rather than a desire for money, you have to applaud, at least a bit. Unlike money, grandiosity is in unlimited supply; we can all feel tremendously significant. As a journalist, I naturally believe that those who spout their opinions in magazines and on TV—contributing to public discourse, we call it—are leading worthier lives than those whose passion is casino design. The casino designers no doubt think that pundits are pathetic. I recall a Hollywood starlet who remarked at the White House correspondents' dinner a few years ago that it was cute to see all the nerds trying to have fun.

In some ways the health of a society can be measured by how many avenues to self-importance it opens up. In America, which is a successful society, we can all be celebrities in some little sphere, and we are very impressed with ourselves. During the most recent presidential election a *Time* magazine–CNN poll asked voters whether they were in the top one percent of income earners. Nineteen percent reported that they were, and another 20 percent said that they expected to be there one day.

We are a nation in which almost everybody is above average. We are convinced that we are running our own lives quite well, whereas the idiots around us are screwing up theirs. The journalist David Whitman called this “the optimism gap” in his 1998 book of the same name: my kids' school is good, but the nation's schools stink; my congressman is wonderful, but members of Congress in general are bums; my neighborhood is safe, but crime in general is rampant. It's similar to the attitude that George Carlin says many people bring with them onto the highway: I drive responsibly, but people



who drive faster than I do are maniacs, and people who drive slower are idiots.

Still, this pluralism does have its downsides. First, it can't be good that most Americans have entered their own little worlds of self-validation and know very little about their countrymen outside. Consider how little a New York television-news producer probably knows about people who are active in Willow Creek and other megachurches. Or how little a Texas rancher probably knows about people who care whether Cornel West teaches at Harvard or Princeton. Not long ago these different people would have had *Life* magazine in common, or Walter Cronkite. A generation ago compulsory military service threw diverse people together. But none of this is the case any longer.

Second, pluralism of this sort encourages an easygoing relativism: I feel good about the code of honor in my little social set. Those people over there feel good about the code of honor in their social set. As long as we don't try to impose our values on anybody else, we will all live in harmony. That sounds like a recipe for moral mediocrity.

Third, it leads to national stagnation. The great radicals all felt in some way

frustrated; they felt that society was blocking their expectations and must be fundamentally questioned and reformed. Think of the African-Americans who led the civil-rights marches, and the New York Jewish intellectuals who saw the top echelons of society closed to them. But now the civil-rights activist becomes a talk-show host on Black Entertainment Television, and the Jewish intellectual becomes the president of the Modern Language Association. Successful in their own worlds, they feel little compunction about not even speaking the language of those outside. Each segment of society becomes a purer version of itself as the nation as a whole becomes more static.

Surely it would be a good thing if people were encouraged to climb outside their milieu. It would be nice, for example, if AmeriCorps became a rite of passage for young Americans, so that at least for a year of their lives they would be with people unlike themselves. It would be nice if adults who rail against the religious right would go into megachurches or Christian bookstores and actually learn something about the millions they disdain. It would be nice, in other words, if everybody spent some time playing sociologist, and learned about the strangers who are our fellow citizens.

On the other hand, it is delicious to feel oneself the Lord High Achiever of one's own little community. So perhaps it is inevitable that we will just sit back and acknowledge the continued segmentation of our society. In which case I propose a new monument for the Mall in Washington: a huge circular structure, with gleaming marble on the outside and magnifying mirrors covering the walls within. You could walk in and admire reflections of yourself from all angles. And when you reached the center, a great neon sign would flash on, broadcasting to the world the credo of the age: “I Please Me.” ■

David Brooks, an Atlantic correspondent, is also a contributing editor of Newsweek, a senior editor of The Weekly Standard, and a political analyst for The NewsHour With Jim Lehrer. His most recent book is Bobos in Paradise (2000).

NO APPARENT MOTIVE

A chilling characteristic of politicians is that they're not in it for the money

Political season is open. We arm ourselves with what sense and information we possess. We dress in the insulated underwear of liberty, don the rainproof Barbour coat of opinion, and pull on the hip boots of good citizenship. Then we go into our voting-booth camouflage blinds. If it were duck season, we'd know what to do when we got a politician in our sights ...

Stop. Call the game wardens of thought. Gun violence has cost us too many political leaders, and hardly ever the worst ones. Fishing is a gentler metaphor. All I really want to do to politicians is annoy them with op-ed dry flies and watch them bite the hook-concealing worm of media coverage. I don't even mind the catch-and-release program, as practiced on Richard Nixon, Ted Kennedy, and Bill Clinton. I just want to see politicians flop in profound discomfort while smelling fishy.

After thirty years of making fun of politicians, I have decided, contrary to all rules of good humor, that I don't like them. Not that politicians are dislikable. It is their job to be liked. They are very busy at this job and at many other jobs. A politician's day is long. He gets into the office early, reads newspaper clippings with his name highlighted, submits to a radio interview with Howard Stern, goes to a prayer breakfast and an ACLU lunch, checks opinion polls, meets with an NRA delegation, makes a friendly call to Al Sharpton, sits in the Inland Waterways Committee hearing room drawing pictures of sailboats and seagulls on a notepad, proposes National Dried Plum Week, votes "yea" (or is it "nay"?), exercises with the President, recovers from a faked charley horse after being lapped on the White House jogging track, watches the signature machine sign letters to constituents, returns a corporate campaign contribution to WorldCom, speaks at a dinner supporting campaign-finance reform,

goes home, gets on the phone, and fundraises until all hours.

Why? People usually work for money. James Traficant may have gone into politics for the gelt. But most politicians have IQs in the dull-to-normal range, higher than Traficant's. Politicians realize that a person who is as busy and likable as they are could have been making millions in telecommunications-stock fraud. Maybe politicians are motivated by power. They want to boss the show, call

the shots, twist arms, and land on the rest of us like a ton of bricks. That would mean that politicians are bad. Or maybe politicians are motivated by fame. Perhaps they believe the old saw "Washington is Hollywood for the ugly." They want to be fabulous, in the limelight at all times, the only noodle in the soup, and box-office dynamite. That would mean that politicians are mentally ill.

But politics is hedged about with competing interests and advocacies, compromises and conciliations, and all sorts of checks and balances (albeit a lot of the checks have had to be sent back to donors lately). The average practical politician has less power than a high school senior-class president and cannot so much as unilaterally decree that the annual House-Senate sock-hop theme will be "Hula Luau." As for fame, the natural buffoonishness of being President catches the American eye, as does the flamboyancy of an occasional loon's run for prominent office. But in general Americans regard the politician as a type of celebrity falling somewhere between NPR commentator and soap-opera supporting actress. The "undisclosed location" that Dick Cheney occupied for much of the past year may have been, for all that anyone noticed, in a guest box on *Hollywood Squares*.

What is obnoxious about the motives of politicians—whatever those motives may be—is that politicians must announce their motives as visionary

and grand. Try this with the ordinary activities of your day: "My dear wife and beloved children, I say to you this—I will mow the lawn. Lawns are a symbol of America's spacious freedoms and green prosperity. Such noble tokens of well-being and independence must not go untended, lest we show the world that liberty is mere license and see the very ground upon which we stand, as Americans, grow tangled with the weeds of irresponsibility and be fruitful only in the tares of greed. I will give the grass clippings to the poor."

Politicians are not, as a class, outstandingly evil or insane. For the most part they're just ridiculous people. One actually suspects them of liking politics. In *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, "politics" is defined as, among other things, "the art of adjusting and ordering relationships between individuals and groups in a political community." Even someone in a very small political community (my house) who holds an office that is largely ceremonial (dad) knows what a Sisyphean task it is to be adjusting and ordering relationships between individuals (the kids and the dog) and groups (the whole family packed in the car) for nothing more than a day at the beach. A person who undertakes more of this, on a larger scale, involving people with whom he is not linked by ties of kinship and to whom he has no ability to give "time-outs," is a ridiculous person indeed.

No doubt the ridiculous politicians are right to like politics. They have found careers in which success can be achieved by being ridiculous. Imagine Jimmy Carter or George W. Bush rising to the top of any other profession. Although Al Gore's combination of patronizing tone, know-it-all attitude, and magnificent grasp of the obvious would have made him a treasure at *The New York Times*. And Bill Clinton surely could make a go of various Arkansas land-development and banking swindles (and may have done so). Some politi-

AT LARGE
**P.J.
O'ROURKE**

cians do exhibit job skills. Harry Truman ran a haberdashery. George H. W. Bush looked for oil. Woodrow Wilson and Lyndon Johnson taught school. Ronald Reagan was a movie actor. But it was a relief to investors, students, and film critics when these politicians finally discovered politics.

It is no bad thing that our politicians are fools. We mortals all famously are. And the theory of democracy is that we can rule ourselves. If exceptionally wise and able men were required to run our democratic system, we'd have a lot of explaining to do to the other fools around the world, from Zimbabwe to North Korea, upon whom we are always urging democratic institutions. Anyway, the history of kingdoms, oligarchies, and dictatorships indicates that ordinary fools do a pretty good job in politics, comparatively.

And it is also no bad thing that the folly of politics itself exists. If the wiles of political maneuver weren't effective, then "adjusting and ordering relationships between individuals and groups" would have to be accomplished by force or technical expertise. Use of force would be hard on one who is short, middle-aged, flabby, and (duck season, in fact, opened on October 2) a bad shot. Use of expertise would be hard on everybody. In *The Road to Serfdom*, Friedrich Hayek pointed out that there could be no worse nightmare than a society in which each form of endeavor was controlled by the acknowledged expert in that field. Tiger Woods is the world's greatest sportsman. But, useful as the five iron is on the golf course, it is a hazard in a hockey game or a synchronized-swimming competition. Imagine: As the editor of

Vogue, Anna Wintour chooses the sleek little off-the-shoulder number worn by Colin Powell at state dinners. Our split-levels and center-hall Colonials are sheathed in wild swoops of titanium by Frank Gehry. J. K. Rowling introduces a "magic hat" into the plot of Jane Austen's *Emma*. Jennifer Aniston plays Lady Macbeth, Hedda Gabler, and Clytemnestra, and Sheridan Whiteside in *The Man Who Came to Dinner*.

Andrew Lloyd Webber is in charge of the Bayreuth Festival. And we all go to bed with Hugh Hefner. There's no quality control in politics, thank heaven.

On the other hand, the hell of it is, there's no quality control in politics. Politics is a tissue of fibs and fantasies. Taxes cannot be lowered without

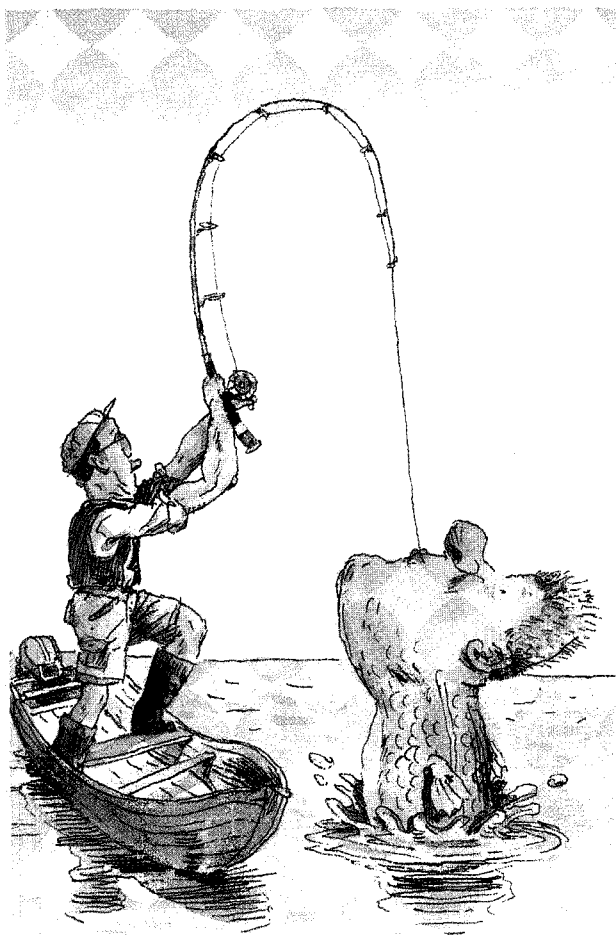
hurting social services. Taxes cannot be raised without damaging the economy. A middle way must be found. Be assured that the way is twisted, dark, and deep in filthy muck. Spending is heaped on corrupt and egregious items (the recent agriculture bill, for instance) while any number of worthy objects are left unfunded (poor people, for example). Most of the problems that politicians face, such as high taxes and inadequate social services, are problems that politicians made—by raising taxes or cutting social services. Thus politicians spend much of their time as skunks going around with aerosol cans of room freshener.

Consider what truth would sound like on the stump, even the least bit of truth: "No, I can't fix public education. When I came home butt-ignorant with lousy grades, my parents didn't blame property-tax inequities, lack of a voucher system, teachers' unions, or the absence of computer equipment in the classroom. Maybe the problem is your unruly and disagreeable children—half of whom, incidentally, are below the median in intelligence. And so, for that matter, am I."

In looking for a way to think about politics, analogies to hunting and fishing won't do. We are not in pursuit of the biggest, fattest politician, or (the Clinton Administration to the contrary) the one with the largest rack of horns. Nor is politics a business, an industry, or any other form of creative activity. Politics is a natural function of the body politic. The body politic produces noisome and unseemly substances, among which are politicians. This is healthy. Much better that politicians be deposited in Washington, D.C., than that they be endured in the home or suffered in the workplace.

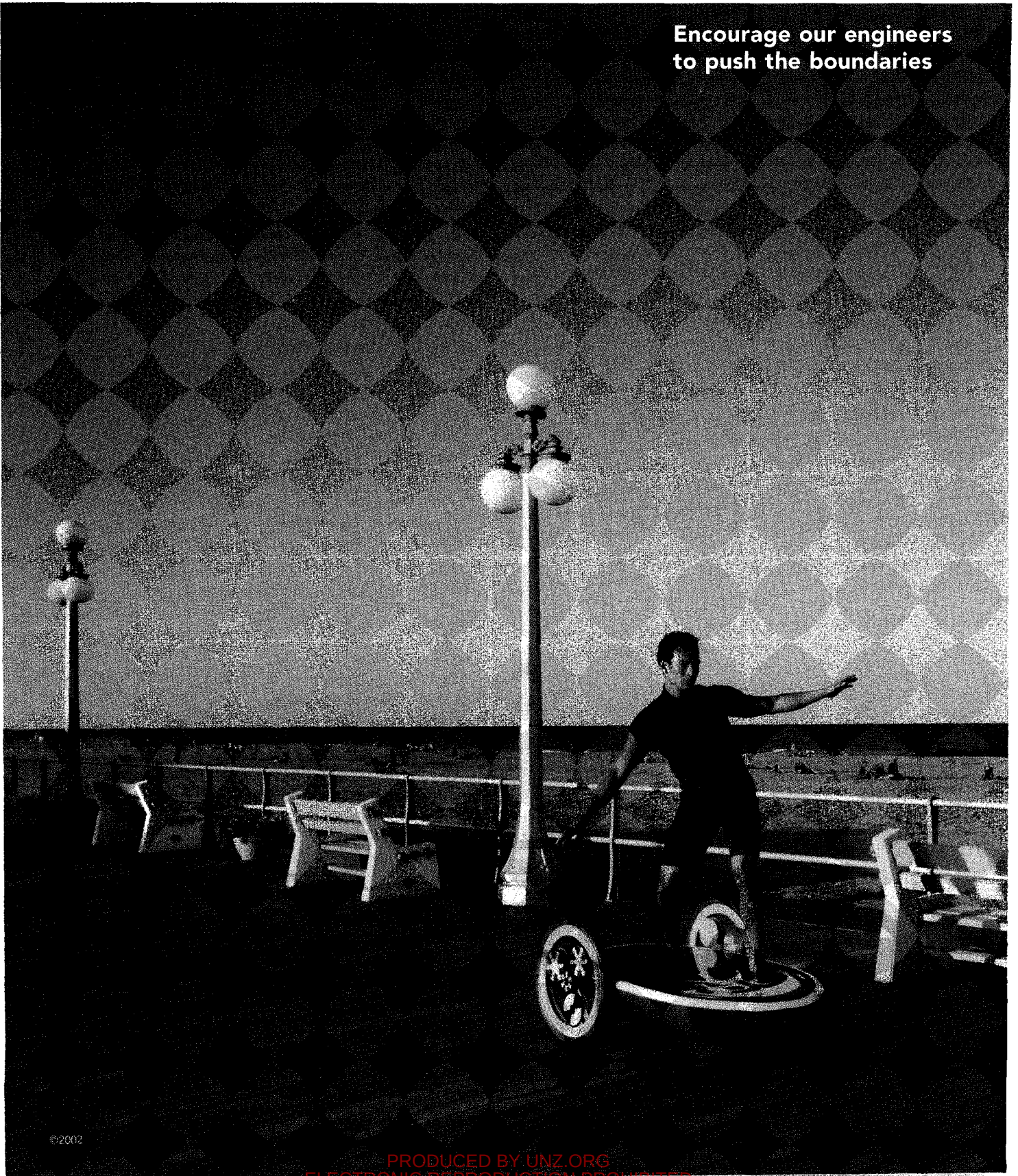
Give people privacy when they are practicing politics. And try not to step in the results. ▀

P.J. O'Rourke is an Atlantic correspondent and the author of several books, including The CEO of the Sofa (2001).



TODAY

**Encourage our engineers
to push the boundaries**



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RANKING THE MOVIE PRESIDENTS

Four distinguished historians rate our celluloid Chief Executives



In 1948 Arthur Schlesinger Sr., a professor at Harvard, asked fifty-five historians to rate the American Presidents. The results, published in *Life* magazine, placed Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt at the top of the list, and Franklin Pierce, Ulysses S. Grant, and Warren G. Harding at the bottom. In 1996 Schlesinger's son, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., repeated the exercise.

But these surveys made some grievous omissions: they failed to take the measure of movie Presidents who had—for better or worse—led the nation through moments of great crisis. To address this lacuna, we convened a panel of top historians to rank America's Hollywood Presidents. We asked our historians to use the same categories the Schlesinger surveys did—Great (4 points), Near Great (3), Average (2), Below Average (1), and Failure (-2).

Our board of historians consists of Alan Brinkley, the Allan Nevins Professor of History at Columbia University; Robert Dallek, a professor of history at Boston University; David M. Kennedy, the Donald J. McLachlan Professor of History at Stanford University and the winner of the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for history; and Ernest May, the Charles Warren Professor of American History at Harvard University.

Although for the purposes of this survey we did not include television Presidents, we did ask our historians about President Josiah Bartlet, of *The West Wing*: he would have topped this list, scoring considerably above Presidents Shepherd and Marshall.

HISTORIANS' EVALUATIONS
ACTIONS
FILM PLOT
NAME

Andrew Shepherd
(Michael Douglas) **7 POINTS**
The American President, 1995

Widowed President Shepherd must balance his demanding job with his love life. When he falls for a smart and charming lobbyist, his Republican antagonist carps about family values and threatens Shepherd's re-election.

Supports environmental bill (promoted by girlfriend) that requires a decrease in fossil-fuel emissions; withdraws his own ineffective crime bill; proclaims love of his country and of his girlfriend in an impromptu speech to the White House press corps.

"Shepherd deserves high marks for doing the right things in the face of counterpressures," Dallek writes. "He could have been one of JFK's profiles in courage, but a great President has to leave a remarkable legacy. I don't see it here." *Near Great*

"Shepherd jeopardizes his political future with an ill-timed romance, unrealistically claiming a right to privacy," Brinkley writes. "But he shows courage in changing course, rejecting cynical symbolism, and choosing substance." *Average*

"Shepherd evidently has no mind of his own," May writes. *Below Average*

"Shepherd pathetically muddled his personal and private lives," Kennedy argues. "He was a weak leader who succumbed to the admittedly abundant charms of Sydney Ellen Wade [Annette Bening] and made himself a pawn of the environmental movement." *Below Average*

James Marshall
(Harrison Ford) **7 POINTS**
Air Force One, 1997

Kazakh hijackers seize the plane carrying the President, but he (an ex-soldier) works from hiding to defeat the terrorists.

Outlines a new zero-tolerance policy on terrorism and tyranny; remains on board his hijacked plane to defend his family and the integrity of the nation; hides while his aides are executed; compromises his principles in order to save his wife and daughter.

Kennedy calls President Marshall a "can-do, take-charge, damn-the-torpedoes kind of guy": "Undeterred by the timid counsel—or even the deaths—of his advisers, Marshall provided a model of what single-minded determination can accomplish." Kennedy speculates that Marshall might be a model for our current President Bush. *Great*

May is similarly admiring ("superb" in the crisis), though he points out that Marshall may have found congressmen and reporters less tractable than the terrorists. *Near Great*

Brinkley and Dallek have more jaundiced views. Brinkley: "Marshall takes a reckless stand against terrorism without sufficient military or political preparation. He jeopardizes global stability by staying on the plane to save his family." *Average*

Dallek: "Marshall's personal heroics in defense of his family are no substitute for making his presidential duties his first priority." *Failure*

Thomas J. Whitmore
(Bill Pullman) **6 POINTS**
Independence Day, 1996

Enormous spaceships appear on July 2, severely disrupting global communications. After the aliens destroy Washington, New York, and Los Angeles, the President and survivors stage a triumphal counterattack on July 4.

Wary of calling for evacuations waits nearly until first attack before clearing U.S. cities; poorly informed about security and intelligence; delivers moving speech to rally his troops; leads a successful battle against the aliens.

Brinkley accords greatness to Whitmore for recovering from his Administration's intelligence failures to "show real leadership in the fight for world survival." *Great*

Dallek's admiration for Whitmore's "ability to rally the country" after the alien invasion is tempered by the President "failure to evacuate the major cities" quickly enough. Also, Dallek says, "his ignorance of national security speaks poorly of this President's skills and judgment." *Near Great*

"Whitmore should have stuck to flying airplanes," Kennedy writes. "As President, he dangerously tried to leverage a threat to American national security into an effort to promote the discredited doctrine of one-worldism." Kennedy deems this President "high on bravura, low on brainpower." *Below Average*

May faults Whitmore for his initial timidity, likening him to Abraham Lincoln's predecessor, James Buchanan. *Failure*



Jordan Lyman

(Fredric March) **5 POINTS**
Seven Days in May, 1964

After the President signs a nuclear disarmament treaty with the USSR, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs plots a coup. Once convinced of the threat, Lyman quashes the coup and upholds the Constitution.

Signs nuclear-disarmament treaty; enlists others to foil coup; thwarts mutinous plotters and forces military insurgents to resign.

Dallek: Lyman "deserves high marks for upholding the Constitution against a military coup" but low marks for his poor political skills, which prevent him from anticipating the coup or building sufficient public support for the disarmament treaty. *Near Great*

Brinkley agrees: "Lyman takes a courageous stand against Cold War orthodoxy, although he lacks the political skill to persuade the public to support him." (Brinkley also gives Lyman credit for over-throwing the coup.) *Near Great*

Kennedy and May are harsher. "Lyman is rescued from a full Failure ranking," Kennedy declares, "only because he eventually rescued the Constitution. But history judges him to have personally invited the disaster that nearly overcame him by foolishly trying to do business with the Evil Empire." *Below Average*

May calls Lyman a President "with no sense of the presidency," adding that "he handled the crisis the way Andrew Johnson might have." *Failure*

Leslie McCloud

(Polly Bergen) **4 POINTS**
Kisses for My President, 1964

While Leslie McCloud makes history as the first female President, her spouse must cope with his duties as First Man. McCloud's tenure is largely successful, but she resigns when she becomes pregnant.

Fends off sexual advances of a Latin American dictator and deplores the undemocratic nature of his government; battles with male members of her Cabinet; combats a Senate subcommittee led by a powerful political enemy who wants to discredit her.

Kennedy: "McCloud's own most courageous decision while in office deprived her of the chance to be recognized as one of the truly great Presidents. But she easily earns a Near Great ranking by selflessly relinquishing the reins of power, thereby resoundingly reaffirming the supremacy of family values." *Near Great*

The other historians look less favorably on her decision to step down when she becomes pregnant. "McCloud's status as the first woman President is enough to give her a memorable place in presidential history," Dallek writes. "But if she didn't think she could be both a President and a mother, why did she run for the office in the first place?" *Average*

"She undermines her achievements by resigning, reinforcing popular ideas of female incapacity," Brinkley writes. *Below Average*

"She didn't do the job she was elected to do," May concludes. *Failure*

Tom Beck

(Morgan Freeman) **3 POINTS**
Deep Impact, 1998

An astronaut crew is sent to blow up a comet heading straight for Earth. When the crew fails, Beck announces that one million Americans will move into giant caves designed to survive the catastrophe.

Suppresses news of comet until contingency plans prepared; declares martial law; confronted by a tidal wave that threatens to wipe out the East Coast, selects 200,000 leaders and scientists for underground bunker; initiates national lottery for remaining spots.

Brinkley ranks President Beck among the greats, saying that "although the real heroes of his presidency are astronauts, Beck deserves credit for not panicking and preparing for contingencies." *Great*

"The first African-American President," Kennedy writes, "Beck restored the vitality of the Middle American heartland and ended forever the tyranny of the bicoastal elites who for so long corrupted American life, though some would say he paid too high a price for doing so." *Near Great*

Dallek and May judge Beck poorly for, as Dallek writes, "failing to solve a big problem and then acting in conflict with the country's democratic traditions to give a small part of the population a chance to survive." *Failure*

"Hoover on a galactic scale," May writes. *Failure*



Robert Fowler

(James Cromwell) **3 POINTS**
The Sum of All Fears, 2002

The President of Russia dies and is replaced by a controversial politician. When a bomb explodes at the Super Bowl, Americans quickly blame Russia. Tension escalates before European neo-Nazis are found to be responsible.

Survives bombing of Super Bowl; blames Russians for attack; consults with staff to plan U.S. response; withdraws offensive forces and reconciles with Russians—but only after nearly causing nuclear war.

President Fowler, according to Kennedy, was "an effective crisis manager, but devoid of the vision thing." *Average*

According to Dallek, though Fowler's "rush to judgment nearly sparked a nuclear war," his restraint ultimately saved the world (and his reputation). Nevertheless, "it is difficult to see anything here that makes him more than an average President." *Average*

According to Brinkley, Fowler's standing was hurt by his "demagogic recklessness" in responding to the terrorist detonation before pulling back in the face of new evidence. *Below Average*

May: Fowler damaged his reputation by "leaping before looking." *Failure*





Dave Kovic
(Kevin Kline) **1 POINT**
Dave, 1993

A look-alike is hired to impersonate the President and, when the President suffers a stroke, is asked to stay on indefinitely. The double, Dave Kovic, takes over the presidency and immediately sets the body politic in order.

Micromanages budget in order to pay for programs that combat homelessness; entertains a lonely child at a shelter; makes Dagwood sandwiches for a Secret Service agent.

Though the typical American may have been impressed by Dave's ability to solve so many policy problems so quickly, our historians were dismayed by his willingness to ignore the Constitution by serving as Chief Executive in the Vice President's stead when the President was incapacitated. May refuses to rank Kovic at all, on the grounds that he was never actually the President.

Brinkley writes that Kovic "deserves low marks for his fraudulent assumption of office," but grants that he does redeem himself somewhat by giving up that office voluntarily. *Average*

Kennedy writes that Kovic's "performance was easily trumped by that of the only other unelected President, Gerald Ford, who, unlike Kovic, had the good sense to do nothing while in office." *Below Average*

Dallek: "Did Dave never hear of the Constitution and the elected Vice President's right to replace the incapacitated President?" *Failure*

Merkin Muffley
(Peter Sellers) **-3 POINTS**
Dr. Strangelove, 1964

A psychotic general schemes to attack Russia with nuclear bombs. Muffley attempts to thwart the plan, but a series of missteps lead to nuclear disaster.

Warns Soviet Premier of impending attack; learns of Soviet defense mechanism—a doomsday device; initiates a nearly successful recall of bombers; gives no forethought to bunkers.

May gives this President the second highest rating, explaining that Muffley "faced one great crisis and concentrated on it." *Near Great*

The others deem him a failure. Dallek says, "He lost control of his Administration and was unable to rein in the renegade generals." *Failure*

Brinkley calls Muffley "well-meaning but ineffectual" and says that Muffley's weakness "produced epic global catastrophe." *Failure*

Kennedy calls Muffley "a pathetically moralizing do-gooder who dithered away a matchless opportunity to end the Cold War and the Soviet Union with a single bold stroke."

Failure



The President
(Henry Fonda) **-3 POINTS**
Fail-Safe, 1964

American nuclear bombers are accidentally sent on an irreversible mission to obliterate Moscow. The President must convince the Soviets that it's a mistake in order to avert a global nuclear holocaust.

Confers about prospect of nuclear war; attempts to persuade a pilot to abort bombing mission; negotiates with Soviet Premier; sends planes to destroy errant U.S. bombers; agrees to destroy New York City as penitence for destroying Moscow.

Brinkley thinks highly of this President. "Faced with a possible nuclear holocaust, the President selflessly sacrifices electoral votes in New York by nuking Manhattan to avoid a wider war. But he does deserve some responsibility for creating the crisis in the first place." *Near Great*

May thinks this President allowed himself to be imprisoned by circumstances, "like Buchanan or Hoover." *Failure*

Dallek says that the President "would have been better advised to promise Moscow full reparations and help in rebuilding the devastation caused by our attack, rather than promising to destroy New York City." *Failure*

Kennedy writes that the President "paid an enormous price for his cheese-paring budget policies that fatally degraded the military's command-and-control structure." Unlike Brinkley, Kennedy believes it was foolish for the President to "permanently lose New York's votes for his party." *Failure*

The President
(Alan Alda) **-3 POINTS**
Canadian Bacon, 1995

The President's popularity begins falling because of high unemployment and an overall economic downturn. In order to boost his poll numbers he starts a war with Canada.

Pushes the United States toward war with Canada; initiates anti-Canadian propaganda campaign; fails to prevent factory closings, offering inspiring Bob Dylan quotations to unemployed workers.

"The only President to give Canada its due," Kennedy writes, "and therein lies the measure of both his achievement and his failing. He had an acute sense of the role of foreign policy in defining a President's historical reputation. He falls short of greatness only because he did not take up arms against a more formidable foe." *Near Great*

Dallek accuses this President of operating outside the Constitution. *Failure*

Brinkley agrees, describing the President as "a feckless leader trading on cynical charm" who deserves impeachment. *Failure*

May says that if Richard Nixon had been as bad as the worst of the Nixon haters thought him to be, he would have been like this President. *Failure*



Even for Drs. Schwartz and Kalet, two people familiar with the fragile biology of humans, the inevitable can be an unpleasant subject. Nevertheless, they know **the life cycle can be hard to predict** and the unthinkable is always a possibility. And they wanted to make sure the ones closest to them would be provided for.

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THE END OF THE WEST

The next clash of civilizations will be not between the West and the rest but between the United States and Europe—and Americans remain largely oblivious

The American era appears to be alive and well. The U.S. economy is more than twice the size of the next biggest—Japan's—and the United States spends more on defense than the world's other major powers combined. China is regularly identified as America's next challenger, but it is decades away from entering the top ranks. The terrorist attacks in New York and Washington certainly punctured the sense of security that arose from the end of the Cold War and the triumph of the West, but they have done little to compromise U.S. hegemony. Indeed, they have reawakened America's appetite for global engagement. At least for the foreseeable future, the United States will continue to enjoy primacy, taking on Islamic terrorism even as it keeps a watchful eye on China.

That encapsulates the conventional wisdom—and it is woefully off the mark. Not only is American primacy far less durable than it appears, but it is already beginning to diminish. And the rising challenger is not China or the Islamic world but the European Union, an emerging polity that is in the process of marshaling the impressive resources and historical ambitions of Europe's separate nation-states.

The EU's annual economic output has reached about \$8 trillion, compared with America's \$10 trillion, and the euro will soon threaten the dollar's global dominance. Europe is strengthening its collective consciousness and character and forging a clearer sense of interests and values that are quite distinct from those of the United States. The EU's member states are debating the adoption of a Europe-wide constitution (a move favored by two thirds of the union's population), building armed forces capable of operating independently of the U.S. military, and striving to project a single voice in the diplomatic arena. As the EU fortifies its governmental institutions and takes in new members (Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic,

and at least four other countries are expected to join in 2004), it will become a formidable counterweight to the United States on the world stage. The transatlantic rivalry that has already begun will inevitably intensify. Centers of power by their nature compete for position, influence, and prestige.

EUROPE
**CHARLES A.
KUPCHAN**

The coming clash between the United States and the European Union will doubtless bear little resemblance to the all-consuming standoff of the Cold War. Although military confrontation remains a remote prospect, however, U.S.-EU competition will extend far beyond the realm of trade. The U.S. Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank are destined to vie for control of the international monetary system. Washington and Brussels will just as likely lock horns over the Middle East. Europe will resist rather than backstop U.S. leadership, perhaps paralyzing the World Bank, the United Nations, and other institutions that since World War II have relied on transatlantic cooperation to function effectively. An ascendant EU will surely test its muscle against America, especially if the unilateralist bent in U.S. foreign policy continues. A once united West appears well on its way to separating into competing halves.

For the moment America remains largely oblivious to the challenges posed by a rising Europe. Policymakers in Washington tend to view the EU as at best an impressive trade bloc, and at worst a collection of feckless allies that regularly complain about America's heavy hand even as they do little to bear the burdens of common defense. Moreover, most American foreign-policy experts presume that were the EU to realize its full potential as a political and economic power, the geopolitical consequences would be minimal: amity among the Atlantic democracies has been a well-entrenched fact of life, an apparently unalterable product of shared history and values. That the EU and the

United States might part ways would seem to border on the unthinkable.

These presumptions are dangerous illusions. To be sure, Europe is not a centralized federation, and its integration is proceeding in fits and starts. But political entities that take shape by stitching together previously separate states always emerge tentatively. The United States began as a loose confederation in 1781. After that formula proved too weak to sustain the Union, America opted for a tighter federation in 1789. It then took roughly a hundred years—not to mention a bloody civil war—for the Union to strengthen its governing bodies, nurture a national identity that transcended state loyalties, and project a geopolitical voice beyond its neighborhood. Europe has been working at political union for about five decades—and faces many hurdles in the years ahead. But the EU is already coming of age as a collective force; it is on, if not well ahead of, schedule.

History also provides ample warning of the trouble likely to accompany a division such as the one that the West is now starting to experience. Consider the fate of the Roman Empire after Diocletian decided, at the end of the third century, to split the realm into eastern and western halves, leading to the establishment of a second capital, in Byzantium—which Constantine elected to rename Constantinople in 324. Despite their shared heritage, Rome and Constantinople became rivals: a common religion fell prey to lasting disputes over authority and doctrine, and imperial unity gave way to bloodshed and the demise of Roman rule.

As Byzantium did with Rome when it separated from its former overseer, the EU is making a run at the United States. And just as the Byzantines and the Romans parted ways over values and interests, so have the Europeans and the Americans. The two sides of the Atlantic follow different social models. Despite recent deregulation across Europe, America's laissez-faire capitalism

still contrasts sharply with Europe's more centralized approach. Whereas Americans decry the constraints on growth that stem from the European model, Europeans look askance at America's income inequalities, its consumerism, and its readiness to sacrifice social capital for material gain.

The two have also parted company on matters of statecraft. Americans still live by the rules of *realpolitik*, viewing military threat, coercion, and war as essential tools of diplomacy. In contrast, Europeans by and large have spent the past fifty years trying to tame international politics, setting aside guns in favor of the rule of law. On July 1, while the EU was celebrating the launch of the International Criminal Court, the Bush Administration was announcing its intention to withdraw U.S. forces from Bosnia unless they were granted immunity from the court's jurisdiction. Europeans see America's reliance on the use of force as simplistic, self-serving, and a product of its excessive power; Americans see the EU's firm commitment to multilateral institutions as naive, self-righteous, and a product of its military weakness.

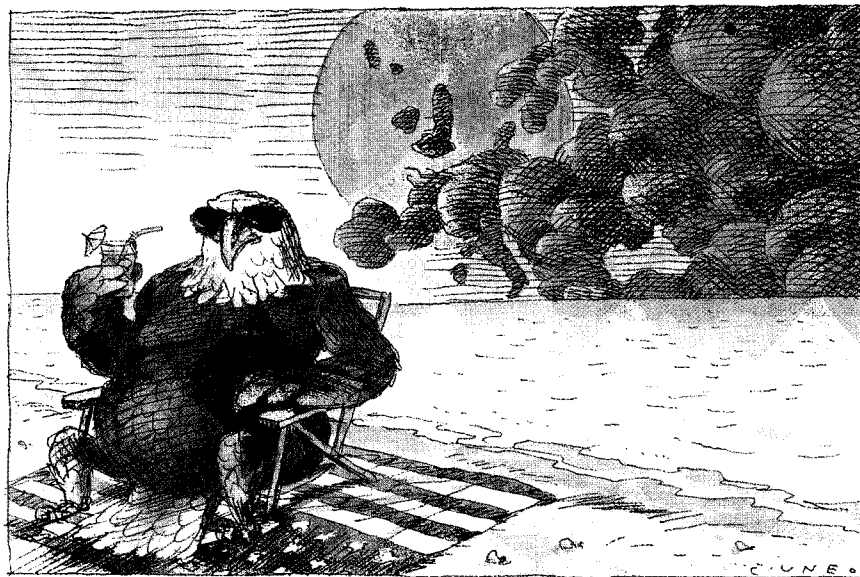
Americans and Europeans still enjoy an affinity arising from historical ties and democratic traditions. But even this is wearing thin. As a multi-ethnic immigrant nation, America has begun to wonder about a Europe that remains hostile to immigrants despite its shrinking population, and that falls prey to bouts of intolerance and anti-Semitism. Europeans, in turn, take a dim view of an America wedded to gun ownership and capital punishment. At root, America and Europe are driven by different political cultures. And the cultural distance appears to be widening, not closing, putting the two sides of the Atlantic on diverging social paths.

As the EU continues to rise, its economic and political interests are likely to collide frequently with those of the United States, intensifying the ill will. Airbus recently surpassed Boeing as the world's

leading supplier of commercial aircraft, and Nokia is the top producer of cell phones; they are only two of many European companies that are now besting their U.S. competitors. In 2000 Britain and France each ranked ahead of the United States in the value of corporate international acquisitions. German companies have been expanding as well; in 1998 Bertelsmann bought Random House and Daimler-Benz bought Chrysler. Much of the investment capital that buoyed the U.S. economy in the 1990s has lately been heading to the other side of the Atlantic, enabling the euro to gain ground against the dollar

the creation of the union's new military forces even as he pursues diplomatic agendas in the Balkans, the Middle East, and other trouble spots. And the union decided earlier this year to construct its own satellite network, called Galileo—a move that will reduce European reliance on U.S. technology. All these initiatives enjoy strong public support, with more than 70 percent of Europe's citizens favoring, for example, a single security policy for the EU as a whole.

Even if the EU makes good on its military plans, its defense capabilities will admittedly be modest compared with those of the United States. Its members



and increasing the likelihood that the EU will soon enjoy substantial increases in productivity and growth.

These economic successes are impressive in their own right, but there is more to them than meets the eye. From the outset European economic integration has been a daring experiment aimed at politically binding together the Continent's long-warring nations. And the intended effects are now visible. Driving across the border from Germany to France is like driving from Virginia to Maryland: no passport control, no customs, no currency exchange. The EU in 1999 appointed its first foreign-policy chief, who has been busy overseeing

are uninterested in projecting military power globally (not least for the costs associated with doing so). Accordingly, a division of labor is emerging, in which the EU manages Europe's security while U.S. forces focus on the rest of the world. This is not a recipe for a face-off between titans, but it does spell the end of Europe's deference to its American protector and the potential unraveling of NATO.

Britain's decision to enhance its leadership role in Europe is moving the EU more quickly toward self-reliance. London for years kept its distance from the Continent, but Prime Minister Tony Blair has altered course, orchestrating the EU's push on the defense front and

working to take his country into the euro zone. "We must be wholehearted, not halfhearted, partners in Europe," Blair told Britons late last year, warning them that "Britain has no economic future outside Europe." Similarly, Germany's growing comfort with leadership is strengthening the union's political will. As part of its postwar policy of reassurance and reconciliation, Bonn for decades treaded lightly on diplomacy and defense. Since 1999, however, when the seat of government moved back to Berlin, symbolizing a renewed self-confidence, Germany has been actively guiding the EU's evolution, marking out a pathway for building a federal Europe.

This new enthusiasm for Europe's collective enterprise is partly a product of domestic politics. For most of the postwar era, politicians sold integration to their constituents by arguing that it offered the only way for Europe to escape its bloody past. But the younger generation of Europeans has lived through neither World War II nor the Cold War, and therefore has no past from which to escape. As a result, a new political discourse is emerging—one that sees integration as a vehicle for enhancing Europe's power and achieving, rather than checking, international ambitions.

The French used to be alone in looking to the EU as a counterpoise to America, but the other members have now joined in. Tony Blair has asserted, "Whatever its origin, Europe today is no longer just about peace. It is about projecting collective power." Germany's Chancellor Gerhard Schröder called for a "more integrated and enlarged Europe" to offset U.S. hegemony. According to Romano Prodi, the President of the European Commission, the EU's executive body, one of the chief goals of the union is to create "a superpower on the European continent that stands equal to the United States." Göran Persson, the Prime Minister of Sweden, a country that long ago renounced power politics, recently remarked that the EU is "one of the few institutions

we can develop as a balance to U.S. world domination."

The Bush Administration, like the Clinton Administration before it, has been none too pleased about Europe's growing assertiveness, but Washington's dismissive attitude toward the EU up to now has only strengthened Europe's resolve. Bush's penchant for unilateralism, in particular, has provoked European pique. As Bush backs away from the Kyoto Protocol on global warming, withdraws from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, and distances the United States from a host of multilateral institutions, Europe grows ever more convinced that it must both challenge America and chart its own course.

After September 11 Europeans hoped that an America confronted with the threat of terrorism might rediscover the virtues of multilateralism. But soon Bush was unilaterally declaring Iraq, Iran, and North Korea an "axis of evil" and indicating that he intended to topple Saddam Hussein with or without the approval of U.S. allies. Germany's Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer then cautioned Washington that "alliance partners are not satellites." The *Berliner Zeitung* lamented that far from renouncing its go-it-alone ways, the United States had "used the opportunity to strengthen its selfish superpower position." "Never has a president of the United States been so foreign to us," the newspaper proclaimed in an editorial, "and never have German citizens been so skeptical about the policies of their most powerful of allies." With America and Europe squabbling over the sources of terrorism as well as how best to fight it, this new threat promises to exacerbate rather than repair the widening transatlantic divide.

The consequences of the growing rift between the United States and Europe are only just becoming apparent. The two sharply disagree on the Middle East: the EU opposes both America's steady support of Israel and its insistence

on isolating, rather than engaging, Iraq and Iran. Trade disputes are heating up, especially over steel and agriculture. Despite America's defection from the Kyoto Protocol, the EU moved forward with more than a hundred countries participating, leaving Washington a lonely and, from all appearances, an environmentally irresponsible bystander. Last year EU member states took the lead in voting the United States off two UN commissions—payback for America's unilateral ways.

As Europe increasingly holds its own and the United States continues to shrug off compromise, the international institutions that have helped to promote peace and prosperity since World War II will inevitably falter. As the EU enlarges eastward, it will come to dominate the geopolitics of Eurasia, gradually replacing America as the arbiter of the globe's strategic heartland. As capital flows to Europe and a rising euro competes with the dollar as a reserve currency, the monetary stability of recent decades will give way to a self-interested jockeying more reminiscent of the 1930s. The order that has come with a single captain at the helm will be no more.

History is coming full circle. After breaking away from the British Empire, the United States came together as a unitary federation, emerged as a leading nation, and eventually eclipsed Europe's Great Powers. It is now Europe's turn to ascend and break away from an America that refuses to surrender its privileges of primacy.

Europe will inevitably rise up as America's principal competitor. Should Washington and Brussels begin to recognize the dangers of the growing gulf between them, they may be able to contain their budding rivalry. Should they fail, however, to prepare for life after Pax Americana, they will ensure that the coming clash of civilizations will be not between the West and the rest but within a West divided against itself. ■

Charles A. Kupchan is a professor at Georgetown University and a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. His book The End of the American Era: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Geopolitics of the Twenty-first Century will be published this month.

PRIMARY SOURCES

Selections from recent reports, studies, and other documents

The Department of Justice's Control Over Weapons and Laptop Computers Summary Report

After a March 2001 audit of the Immigration and Naturalization Service's property management found that more than 500 weapons had been classified as "lost, missing, or stolen," Attorney General John Ashcroft ordered a review of how various other Justice Department components keep track of their weapons and laptop computers. The Office of the Inspector General recently released its report (which includes a chart showing that at the FBI the average time between discovering that a weapon is lost and filing a written report of the loss is 4.3 years).

During the time periods covered by our reviews [October 1, 1999, through January 31, 2002], the components collectively reported losses of at least 775 weapons and 400 laptop computers.

[T]he FBI had not completed a physical inventory of controlled personal property since before 1993. In the intervening years, the FBI had attempted to conduct inventories, but these were never completed ... It is simply not acceptable for the FBI to have failed to complete a physical inventory of controlled personal property in almost ten years and for the Department to be unaware of this weakness.

—Office of the Inspector General, Justice Department (www.usdoj.gov/oig/audit/0231/index.htm)

News Media's Improved Image Proves Short-Lived

Among the 1,365 respondents to one of the latest of the Pew Research Center's occasional surveys, *The Wall Street Journal* was seen as the most credible print source for news; CNN was seen as the most credible TV source; Tom Brokaw was, by a narrow margin, viewed as the most credible TV news person; and Geraldo Rivera was, by a wider margin, viewed as the least credible. (Among other public figures Colin Powell was seen as the most credible, followed by Oprah Winfrey and Alan Greenspan.)

The favorable glow from the media's post-9/11 performance has completely disappeared ... [T]he public's grades for news organizations have tumbled since November [2001], on measures ranging from professionalism and patriotism to compassion and morality. Just 49% think news organizations are highly professional, down from 73% in November. If anything, the news media's rating for professionalism is now a bit lower than it was in early September [2001], shortly before the terrorist strikes (54%).

—Pew Research Center for the People & the Press (people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=159)

The 2002 Brown Center Report on American Education

Athletes tend to have higher earnings than nonathletes in the ten to fifteen years after high school graduation. Why?

From the human capital perspective, high school sports enhance an individual's stock of productive resources. Athletes may learn self-discipline, how to follow directions, perseverance, and how to set goals, a valuable set of skills for success in college and the workplace.

Another explanation focuses on social capital. High school sports ... bring parents of athletes into close contact, and create dense social networks around youngsters ... If an athlete decides to do something stupid, it is likely that an adult will hear about it and have a chance to intervene. Non-athletes ... often pass through school anonymously ... Kids who go out for a team sport may be intrinsically different than others—more ambitious, harder working, more confident in themselves. Signaled of the likelihood that a person possesses these traits, educators and employers reward athletes with good grades, admission to college, good jobs, and high wages.

—The Brown Center on Education Policy at the Brookings Institution (brookings.edu/dybdocroot/gs/brown/brown_hp.htm)

Education, Poverty, Political Violence, and Terrorism: Is There a Causal Connection?

Alan B. Krueger, of Princeton University, and Jitka Maleckova, of Charles University, in Prague, tentatively conclude that higher living standards may not prevent hate crimes or acts of terror—and, indeed, may promote them. "On the whole," the authors write, "we conclude that there is little reason to be optimistic that a reduction in poverty or increase in educational attainment will lead to a meaningful reduction in the amount of international terrorism."

More educated people from privileged backgrounds are more likely to participate in politics, probably in part because political involvement requires some minimum level of interest, expertise, commitment to issues and effort, all of which are more likely if people are educated and wealthy enough to concern themselves with more than mere economic subsistence ... Terrorist organizations may prefer highly educated individuals over less educated ones, even for homicide suicide bomb attacks. In addition, educated, middle or upper class individuals are better suited to carry out acts of international terrorism than are impoverished illiterates because the terrorists must fit into a foreign environment to be successful.

—National Bureau of Economic Research, Working Paper 9074 (papers.nber.org/papers/W9074)

Vadim Levin and Alex Sheyngis et al v. General Media Communications

When General Media raised the newsstand price for the June 2002 issue of *Penthouse*, many people willingly paid the one-dollar premium: the cover promised that inside were exclusive photos of Anna Kournikova "Caught Close Up on Nude Beach." But the photos weren't really of the Russian tennis player. In May, Judith Soltesz-Benetton filed a lawsuit claiming that the photos were actually of her; after looking at them, the presiding judge declared, "It's hard to believe any reasonable observer

would believe they show Kournikova.” General Media admitted that the photos were not of the tennis star and settled the litigation with Ms. Soltesz-Benetton. Now two men have filed a class-action suit on behalf of all those who bought the \$8.99 June issue on the newsstand.

☞ *Plaintiffs ... would have acted differently had they been advised that Defendant's June 2002 issue did not contain any photos of Anna Kournikova caught on a nude beach. [Plaintiffs] would not have purchased the June 2002 issue had they been aware of the misrepresentation. As a direct and proximate result of Defendant's deceptive conduct and marketing Plaintiffs and putative class plaintiffs have been damaged. WHEREFORE [Plaintiffs] respectfully [request] this Court enter an order: ... Awarding Plaintiffs and Plaintiffs' class damages as appropriate for Defendant's violation of the Consumer Fraud Laws.*

—Circuit Court of Cook County, County Department, Chancery Division (news.findlaw.com/hdocs/docs/kournikova/levinak82602cmp.pdf)

The Bigger They Are, The Harder They Fall: An Estimate of the Costs of the Crisis in Corporate Governance

Three economic researchers calculate in a working paper that the loss of confidence following the collapse of Enron and WorldCom will cost the U.S. economy \$37 billion to \$42 billion in reduced GDP—“in the range of what the federal government spends per year on homeland security, or the increase in the cost of oil imports from a ... \$10 increase in the per barrel price of crude oil.”

—The Brookings Institution (brookings.edu/views/papers/graham/20020722.htm)

Executive Excess 2002

According to the ninth annual CEO-compensation survey, the average CEO makes 411 times as much as the average worker. (Twenty years ago, in contrast, CEOs earned only forty-two times as much as their workers.) If the average

annual pay for production workers had increased at the same rate as CEOs' pay has since 1990, a production worker might have made \$101,156 in 2001, rather than \$25,467. The report also reveals that engaging in dubious accounting practices can pay off handsomely: top executives at twenty-three companies under investigation for accounting fraud earned 70 percent more (\$62.2 million versus \$36.5 million) than top executives at other large companies.

—Institute for Policy Studies and United for a Fair Economy (ufenet.org/press/2002/EE2002_pr.html)

Conventional Arms Transfers to Developing Nations, 1993–2000

The value of all conventional-arms sales contracts worldwide increased for the third consecutive year in 2000, reaching nearly \$36.9 billion. Despite the three-year increase, however, the inflation-adjusted total was still lower than in 1993, when countries were re-arming themselves after the Gulf War. In 2000 the United States was by far the leading exporter of arms (involved in more than half of all arms-transfer agreements), followed by Russia, France, Germany, Israel, and China. The biggest market for arms has been the Near East. From 1997 to 2000 the United Arab Emirates ordered more arms than any other nation, followed by India, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, China, and Israel.

—Congressional Research Service (clw.org/atop/grimmatt2001_report.pdf)

Making a Name

When the suffragist and abolitionist Lucy Stone married, in 1855, she did something evidently unprecedented: she kept her own surname. Not for another 120 years or so would this become a common practice in America. Claudia Goldin, a Harvard economist, and one of her former students, Maria Shim, looked at twenty years' worth of *New York Times* wedding announcements

and found, not unexpectedly, that the proportion of brides retaining their surnames had increased, from less than 10 percent in 1980 to about 20 percent in 1984–1998 to nearly 35 percent today. But there's a curious internal dynamic. When the researchers looked at alumni surveys from the Harvard class of 1980, they found that 38 percent of women who married within five years of graduation retained their surnames, compared with 57 percent of those who married later than that.

—National Bureau of Economic Research, Working Paper 8474 (papers.nber.org/papers/W8474)

Race in American Public Schools: Rapidly Resegregating School Districts

Segregation in the U.S. public school system declined after the Supreme Court's 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, reaching its lowest levels in the mid-1980s. Since 1986, however, rates of “inter-racial exposure” in the public schools have declined; several Court decisions in the 1990s appear to have accelerated a nationwide trend toward resegregation. This study, which looked at 239 school districts with enrollments of more than 25,000, found that levels of school integration are falling, most rapidly in the South and the West. (The five most rapidly resegregating school districts are in Texas and Georgia, and three of the five whitest school districts in the nation are in Texas.)

—The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University (www.law.harvard.edu/civilrights/publications/reseg_districts02/Race_in_American_Public_Schools1.pdf)

Dirty Water: Estimated Deaths from Water-Related Diseases

In 2000, according to a World Health Organization assessment, 1.1 billion people worldwide had no regular access to safe drinking water, and 2.4 billion

had no regular access to sanitation systems. Lack of access to clean water leads to four billion cases of diarrhea each year. Peter Gleick, an expert on global freshwater resources, reveals that even if we reach the United Nations' stated goal of halving the number of people without access to safe drinking water by 2015, as many as 76 million people will die from water-borne diseases before 2020.

—The Pacific Institute for Studies in Development, Environment, and Security (pacinst.org)

Probability of Decline in Real GDP

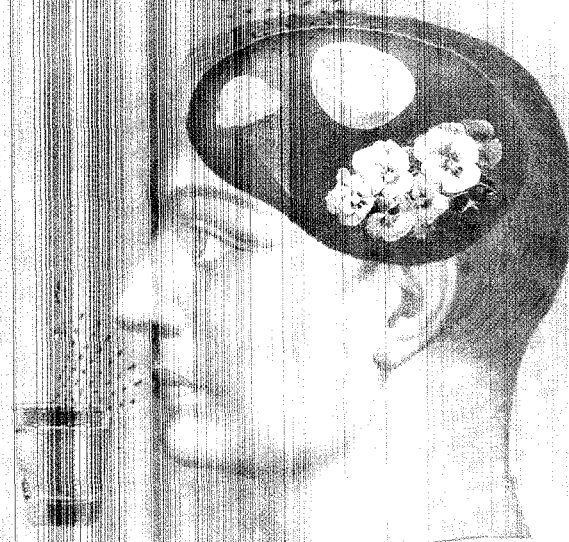
This economic barometer, dubbed the "Anxious Index" by the *New York Times* reporter David Leonhardt, is drawn from the Survey of Professional Forecasters, the longest-running quarterly macroeconomic survey in the United States. It asks experts to predict the likelihood that the GDP will decline in the quarter following the one in which the survey is conducted. The most recent survey, conducted in the third quarter of this year, posits a 19 percent likelihood that the GDP will decline in the period ending in December. Since 1968, when the survey began, every Anxious Index above 30 percent has been followed by a recession.

—Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia (www.phil.frb.org/econ/spf/index.html)

Work and Family Life Study

The latest results from this long-term study (begun in 1980) of marital instability indicate that women unhappy in their marriages often enter full-time employment as an escape. But although a woman's entrance into the workplace does tend to increase the stability of her marriage, it does not increase her happiness.

—The Population Research Institute, Penn State University (www.pop.psu.edu/searchable/press/jun2402.htm)



A single dram of the ten-year-old Glenmorangie may reveal as many as thirty distinct nuances of flavour and fragrance. Traces of citrus, a hint of vanilla, and a subtle floral aroma are readily apparent. Equally so, the joyful realization that to discern the twenty-seven remaining nuances may require a bit more than a single dram.



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THE SHRINKING ELECTORATE

Is the much lamented decline in U.S. voter turnout a sign of civic ill health? Not necessarily

During the past forty years the American electorate has become wealthier and vastly better educated. Moreover, electoral reforms have made voting easier (for eligible voters) than at any point since the late 1800s. According to models of voting behavior created by electoral scholars, these changes (all else being equal) should have raised voter turnout by five percentage points or more, to close to 70 percent. Instead it has fallen, to around 50 percent.

As the graph on the upper right illustrates, much of the decline occurred in the era of Vietnam and Watergate, when many Americans lost faith in the government. Since the 1970s voting rates have remained low, apparently impervious to the demographic currents and electoral changes that ought to have pushed them back upward.

After 9/11 some commentators expressed hope that a strong civic response to the terrorist attacks might begin to reverse forty years of falling political engagement. That hasn't happened. Just two months after the attacks only a quarter of the adult population of New York City voted in the mayoral elections—no improvement over turnout in other

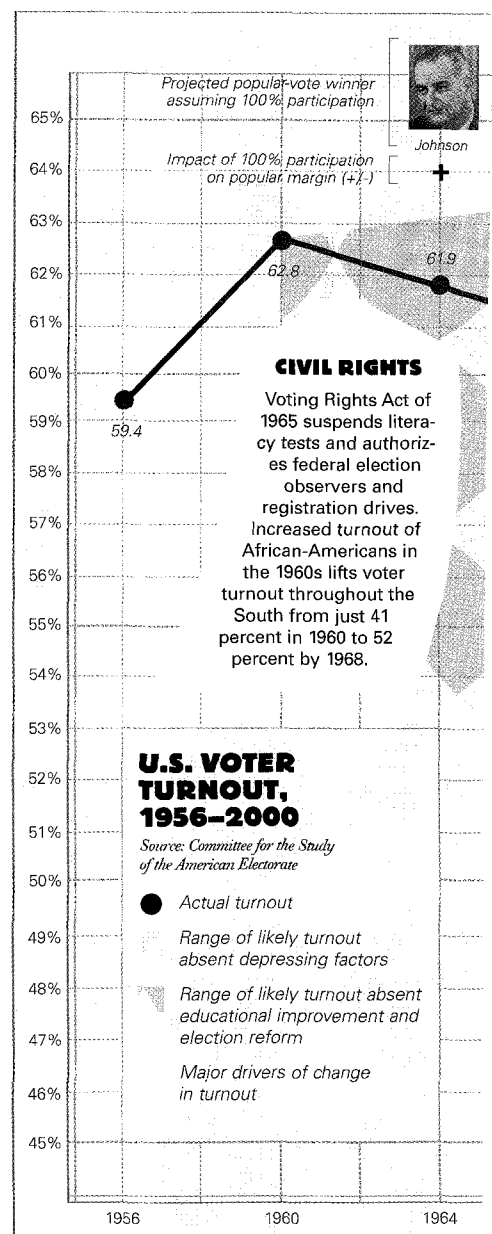
recent mayoral elections. Gubernatorial races in Virginia and New Jersey drew no more voters than usual—in fact, New Jersey's turnout declined significantly. Nationwide the percentage of eighteen-to twenty-four-year-olds who are registered to vote has fallen during the past two years.

Poor attendance at the polls is frequently lamented as a sign of the country's civic ill health. If millions of Americans don't vote, one argument goes, the composition of the government will not accurately reflect the will of the people, especially because the decline in voter turnout has been greater in some groups than others: the young, the poor, and the poorly educated are increasingly under-represented. Doesn't this undermine the functioning of our democracy?

Surprisingly, no. Americans who do vote appear to represent very accurately the preferences of the population as a whole. For more than forty years National Election Studies surveys conducted in advance of each presidential election by the University of Michigan have asked voters and nonvoters about their candidate preferences. It turns out that in every election after 1960 the popular-vote winner among actual voters would still have been the winner (often by a larger margin) if there had been a full turnout. Other academic studies have revealed similar patterns.

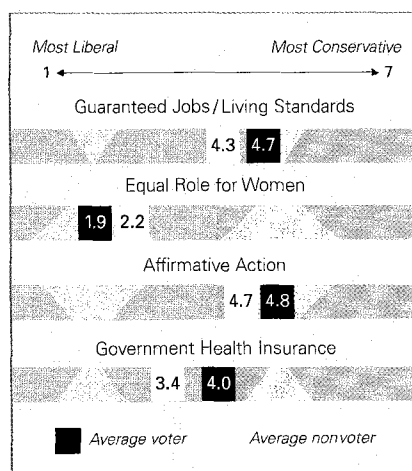
Why is this the case? Two reasons. First, although nonvoters often identify with a party (usually the Democratic Party), they typically describe themselves as much less partisan than do party members who vote. They tend to weigh "performance" issues (the economy, conduct of foreign policy) more heavily than ideological positions. In this respect they resemble the independent voters who often swing elections. Nonvoters also tend to express a preference for whoever is already winning—a bandwagon effect that has regularly overwhelmed partisan allegiances. And as the box on the left shows, there is no ideological gulf between voters and nonvoters on their specific policy preferences.

Diminishing voter turnout is not just an American problem: turnout has declined since 1980 in virtually every advanced democracy. Over this period



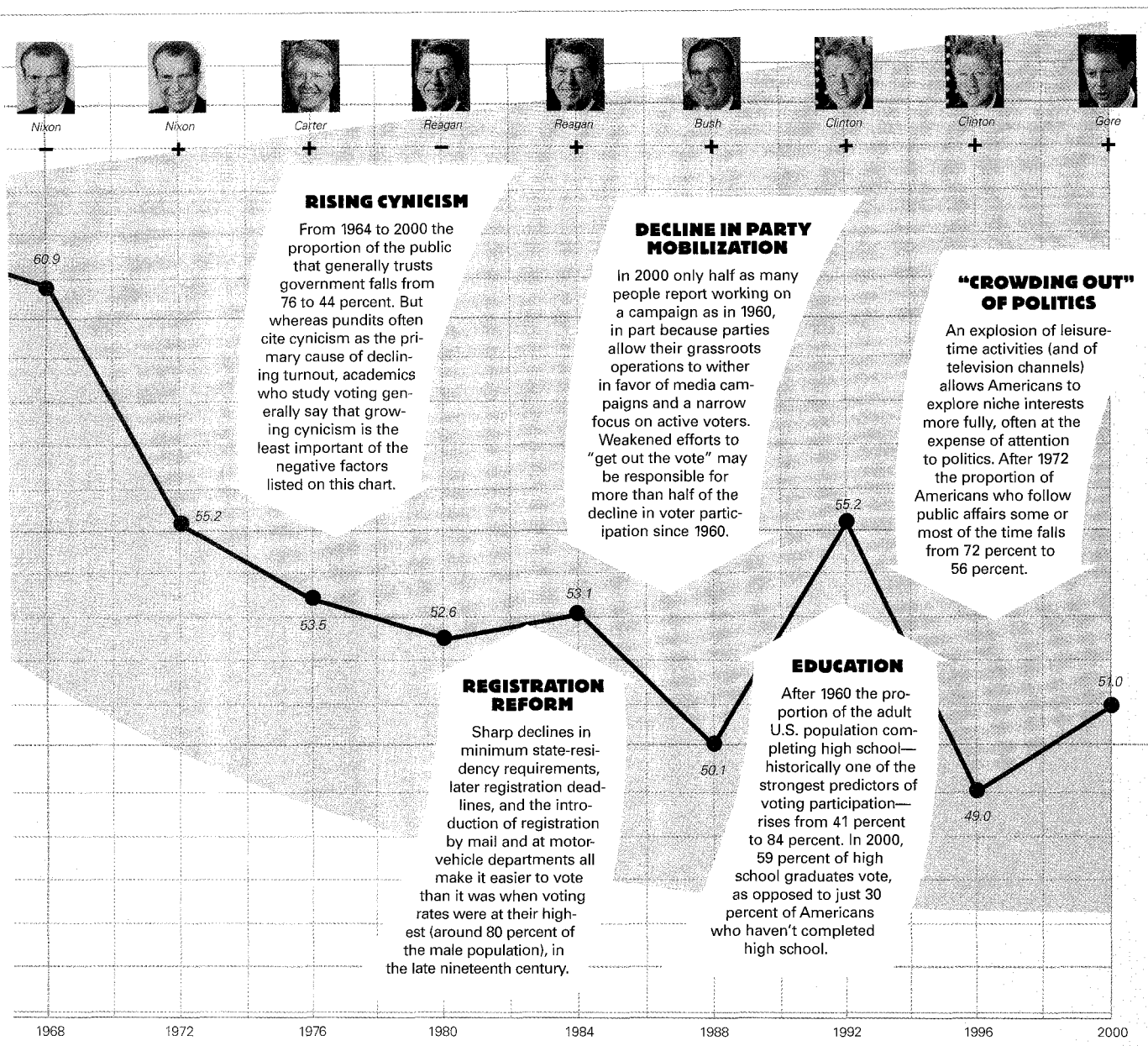
POLICY PREFERENCES OF VOTERS AND NONVOTERS, 2000

Self-reported placement on ideological scale
Source: National Election Studies



declines abroad have generally steepened, even as U.S. reductions have slowed. At a minimum this suggests that U.S. voter turnout has not been declining because of anything uniquely corrosive in American culture. And it seems to suggest that a loss of trust in government, spurred specifically by Vietnam and Watergate, is not the principal driver of lower turnout.

A better explanation for decline may be the changing nature of election campaigns. In recent decades the parties have moved away from grassroots mobilization efforts, which reach out to nonvoters, to focus on "switching" independents who have a strong history



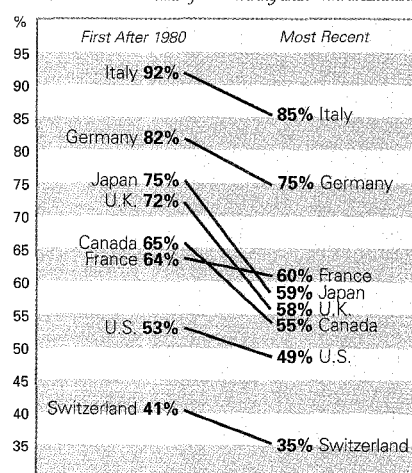
of voting. This change has come for two main reasons. First, new technologies allow campaign workers to identify and target regular voters more easily. Second, many social groups that—when mobilized—used to vote predictably as a bloc (Catholic churchgoers, for example, or blue-collar workers) no longer do so, making it less effective for candidates to reach out to them en masse.

None of this should eliminate concern about low voting rates. Over time, falling participation could erode democratic vigor (and, theoretically, even the political legitimacy of the government), and the skewing of the active electorate toward the older and wealthier could

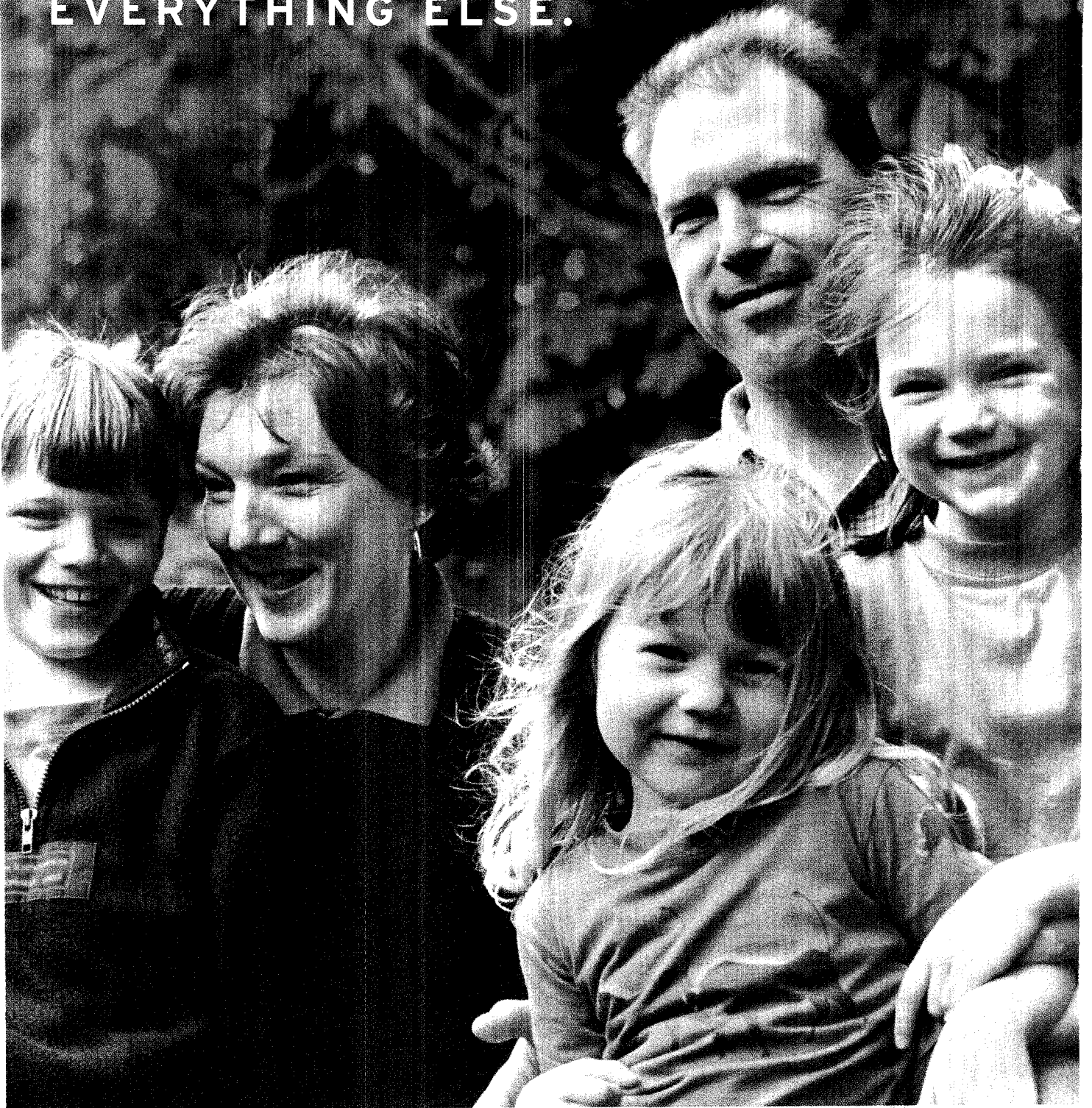
ultimately make election outcomes unrepresentative of what the larger public wants. But on balance, the evidence undermines the argument that we are suffering a true crisis of representation in the United States. Despite lower voter turnout overall, since 1960 the underrepresentation of African-Americans has been greatly reduced, and the underrepresentation of women has been eliminated. This is encouraging—as is the fact that low turnout seems to be at least partly related to a lessening of "social cleavages" caused by such issues as religion and ethnicity, which have historically animated people to vote. —DON PECK

INTERNATIONAL TURNOUT FOR MAJOR ELECTIONS

Source: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance



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THEIR KIDS HAVE OUTGROWN
EVERYTHING ELSE.

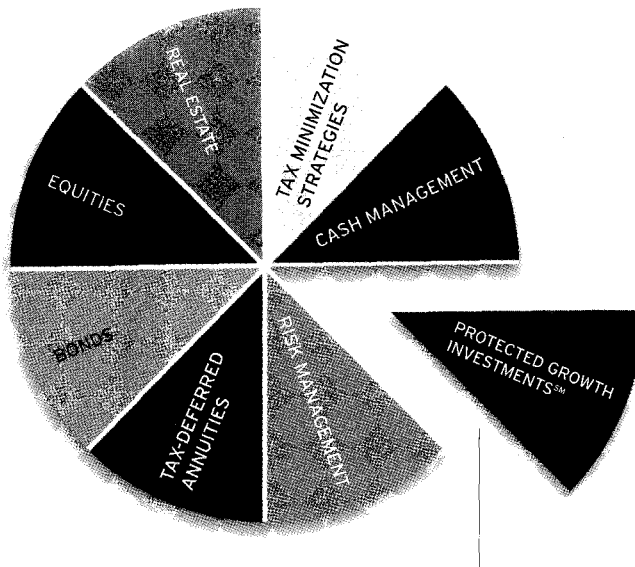


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BULLISH on AMERICA

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THE FIFTY-FIRST STATE?

Going to war with Iraq would mean shouldering all the responsibilities of an occupying power the moment victory was achieved. These would include running the economy, keeping domestic peace, and protecting Iraq's borders—and doing it all for years, or perhaps decades. Are we ready for this long-term relationship?

BY JAMES FALLOWS

Illustrations by Steve Brodner

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Over the past few months I interviewed several dozen people about what could be expected in Iraq after the United States dislodged Saddam Hussein. An assumption behind the question was that sooner or later the United States would go to war—and would go with at best a fraction of the international support it enjoyed eleven years ago when fighting Iraq during the Gulf War. Most nations in the region and traditional U.S. allies would be neutral or hostile unless the Bush Administration could present new evidence of imminent danger from Iraq.

A further assumption was that even alone, U.S. forces would win this war. The victory might be slower than in the last war against Iraq, and it would certainly cost more American lives. But in the end U.S. tanks, attack airplanes, precision-guided bombs, special-operations forces, and other assets would crush the Iraqi military. The combat phase of the war would be over when the United States destroyed Saddam Hussein's control over Iraq's government, armed forces, and stockpile of weapons.

What then?

The people I asked were spies, Arabists, oil-company officials, diplomats, scholars, policy experts, and many active-duty and retired soldiers. They were from the United States, Europe, and the Middle East. Some firmly supported a pre-emptive war against Iraq; more were opposed. As of late summer, before the serious domestic debate had begun, most of the people I spoke with expected a war to occur.

I began my research sharing the view, prevailing in Washington this year, that forcing "regime change" on Iraq was our era's grim historical necessity: starting a war would be bad, but waiting to have war brought to us would be worse. This view depended to some degree on trusting that the U.S. government had information not available to the public about exactly how close Saddam Hussein is to having usable nuclear warheads or other weapons of mass de-

struction. It also drew much of its power from an analogy every member of the public could understand—to Nazi Germany. In retrospect, the only sin in resisting Hitler had been waiting too long. Thus would it be in dealing with Saddam Hussein today. Richard Perle, a Reagan-era Defense Department official who is one of the most influential members outside government of what is frequently called the "war party," expressed this thought in representative form in an August column for the London *Daily Telegraph*: "A pre-emptive strike against Hitler at the time of Munich would have meant an immediate war, as opposed to the one that came later. Later was much worse."

Nazi and Holocaust analogies have a trumping power in many arguments, and their effect in Washington was to make doubters seem weak—Neville Chamberlains, versus the Winston Churchills who were ready to face the truth. The most experienced military figure in the Bush Cabinet, Secretary of State Colin Powell, was cast as the main "wet," because of his obvious discomfort with an effort that few allies would support. His instincts fit the general sociology of the Iraq debate: As a rule, the strongest advocates of pre-emptive attack, within the government and in the press, had neither served in the military nor lived in Arab societies. Military veterans and Arabists were generally doves. For example: Paul Wolfowitz, the deputy secretary of defense and the intellectual leader of the war party inside the government, was in graduate school through the late 1960s. Richard Armitage, his skeptical counterpart at the State Department and Powell's ally in pleading for restraint, is a Naval Academy graduate who served three tours in Vietnam.

I ended up thinking that the Nazi analogy paralyzes the debate about Iraq rather than clarifying it. Like any other episode in history, today's situation is both familiar and new. In the ruthlessness of the adversary it resembles dealing with Adolf Hitler. But Iraq, unlike Germany, has no indus-

trial base and no military allies nearby. It is split by regional, religious, and ethnic differences that are much more complicated than Nazi Germany's simple mobilization of "Aryans" against Jews. Hitler's Germany constantly expanded, but Iraq has been bottled up, by international sanctions, for more than ten years. As in the early Cold War, America faces an international ideology bent on our destruction and a country trying to develop weapons to use against us. But then we were dealing with another superpower, capable of obliterating us. Now there is a huge imbalance between the two sides in scale and power.

If we had to choose a single analogy to govern our thinking about Iraq, my candidate would be World War I. The reason is not simply the one the historian David Fromkin advanced in his book *A Peace to End All Peace*: that the division of former Ottoman Empire territories after that war created many of the enduring problems of modern Iraq and the Middle East as a whole. The Great War is also relevant as a powerful example of the limits of human imagination: specifically, imagination about the long-term consequences of war.

The importance of imagination was stressed to me by Merrill McPeak, a retired Air Force general with misgivings about a pre-emptive attack. When America entered the

war meant the collapse of three empires, the Ottoman, the Austro-Hungarian, and the Russian; the cresting of another, the British; the eventual rise of Hitler in Germany and Mussolini in Italy; and the drawing of strange new borders from the eastern Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf, which now define the battlegrounds of the Middle East. Probably not even the United States would have found the war an attractive bargain, even though the U.S. rise to dominance began with the wounds Britain suffered in those years.

In 1990, as the United States prepared to push Iraqi troops out of Kuwait, McPeak was the Air Force chief of staff. He thought that war was necessary and advocated heavy bombing in Iraq. Now he opposes an invasion, largely because of how hard it is to imagine the full consequences of America's first purely pre-emptive war—and our first large war since the Spanish-American War in which we would have few or no allies.

We must use imagination on both sides of the debate: about the risks of what Saddam Hussein might do if left in place, and also about what such a war might unleash. Some members of the war party initially urged a quick in-and-out attack. Their model was the three-part formula of the "Powell doctrine": First, line up

THE SINGLE BEST ANALOGY TO GOVERN OUR THINKING ABOUT IRAQ WOULD BE WORLD WAR I. THE "GREAT WAR" IS A POWERFUL EXAMPLE OF THE LIMITS OF HUMAN IMAGINATION: SPECIFICALLY, IMAGINATION ABOUT THE LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES OF WAR.

Vietnam War, in which McPeak flew combat missions over the jungle, the public couldn't imagine how badly combat against a "weak" foe might turn out for the United States. Since that time, and because of the Vietnam experience, we have generally overdrawn the risks of combat itself. America's small wars of the past generation, in Grenada, Haiti, and Panama, have turned out far better—tactically, at least—than many experts dared to predict. The larger ones, in the Balkans, the Persian Gulf, and Afghanistan, have as well. The "Black Hawk Down" episode in Somalia is the main exception, and it illustrates a different rule: when fighting not organized armies but stateless foes, we have underestimated our vulnerabilities.

There is an even larger realm of imagination, McPeak suggested to me. It involves the chain of events a war can set off. Wars change history in ways no one can foresee. The Egyptians who planned to attack Israel in 1967 could not imagine how profoundly what became the Six Day War would change the map and politics of the Middle East. After its lightning victory Israel seized neighboring territory, especially on the West Bank of the Jordan River, that is still at the heart of disputes with the Palestinians. Fifty years before, no one who had accurately foreseen what World War I would bring could have rationally decided to let combat begin. The

clear support—from America's political leadership, if not internationally. Then assemble enough force to leave no doubt about the outcome. Then, before the war starts, agree on how it will end and when to leave.

The in-and-out model has obviously become unrealistic. If Saddam Hussein could be destroyed by a death ray or captured by a ninja squad that sneaked into Baghdad and spirited him away, the United States might plausibly call the job done. It would still have to wonder what Iraq's next leader might do with the weapons laboratories, but the immediate problem would be solved.

Absent ninjas, getting Saddam out will mean bringing in men, machinery, and devastation. If the United States launched a big tank-borne campaign, as suggested by some of the battle plans leaked to the press, tens of thousands of soldiers, with their ponderous logistics trail, would be in the middle of a foreign country when the fighting ended. If the U.S. military relied on an air campaign against Baghdad, as other leaked plans have implied, it would inevitably kill many Iraqi civilians before it killed Saddam. One way or another, America would leave a large footprint on Iraq, which would take time to remove.

And logistics wouldn't be the only impediment to quick withdrawal. Having taken dramatic action, we would no

doubt be seen—by the world and ourselves, by al Jazeera and CNN—as responsible for the consequences. The United States could have stopped the Khmer Rouge slaughter in Cambodia in the 1970s, but it was not going to, having spent the previous decade in a doomed struggle in Vietnam. It could have prevented some of the genocide in Rwanda in the 1990s, and didn't, but at least it did not trigger the slaughter by its own actions. "It is quite possible that if we went in, took out Saddam Hussein, and then left quickly, the result would be an extremely bloody civil war," says William Galston, the director of the Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy at the University of Maryland, who was a Marine during the Vietnam War. "That blood would be directly on our hands." Most people I spoke with, whether in favor of war or not, recognized that military action is a barbed hook: once it goes in, there is no quick release.

The tone of the political debate reflects a dawning awareness of this reality. Early this year, during the strange "phony war" stage of Iraq discussions, most people in Washington assumed that war was coming, but there was little open discussion of exactly why it was necessary and what consequences it would bring. The pro-war group avoided questions about what would happen after a victory, because to consider postwar complications was to weaken the case for a pre-emptive strike. Some war advocates even said, if pressed, that the details of postwar life didn't matter. With the threat and the tyrant eliminated, the United States could assume that whatever regime emerged would be less dangerous than the one it replaced.

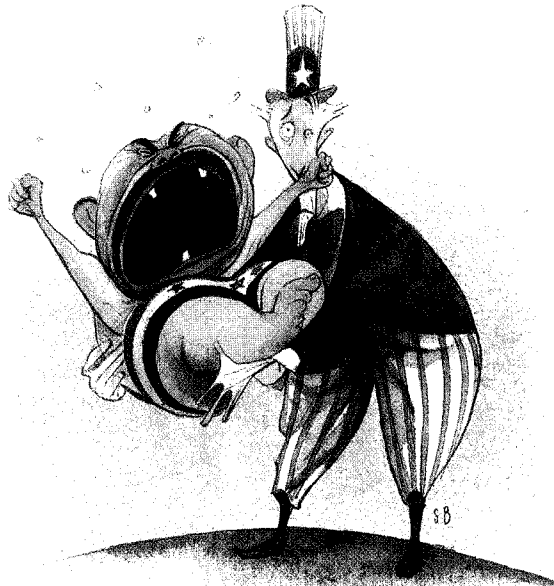
As the swirl of leaks, rumors, and official statements made an attack seem alternately more and less imminent, the increasing chaos in Afghanistan underscored a growing consensus about the in-and-out scenario for Iraq: it didn't make sense. The war itself might be quick, perhaps even quicker than the rout of the Taliban. But the end of the fighting would hardly mean the end of America's commitment. In August, as warlords reasserted their power in Afghanistan, General Tommy Franks, the U.S. commander, said that American troops might need to stay in Afghanistan for many years.

If anything, America's involvement in Afghanistan should have been cleaner and more containable than what would happen in Iraq. In Afghanistan the United States was responding to an attack, rather than initiating regime

change. It had broad international support; it had the Northern Alliance to do much of the work. Because the Taliban and al Qaeda finally chose to melt away rather than stand and fight, U.S. forces took control of the major cities while doing relatively little unintended damage. And still, getting out will take much longer than getting in.

Some proponents of war viewed the likelihood of long involvement in Iraq as a plus. If the United States went in planning to stay, it could, they contended, really make a difference there. Richard Perle addressed a major anti-war argument—that Arab states would flare up in resentment—by attempting to turn it around. "It seems at least as likely," he wrote in his *Daily Telegraph* column, "that Saddam's replacement by a decent Iraqi regime would open the way to a far more stable and peaceful region. A democratic Iraq would be a powerful refutation of the patronizing view that Arabs are incapable of democracy."

Some regional experts made the opposite point: that a strong, prosperous, confident, stable Iraq was the last thing its neighbors, who prefer it in its bottled-up condition, wanted to see. Others pooh-pooed the notion that any Western power, however hard it tried or long it stayed, could bring about any significant change in Iraq's political culture.



Regardless of these differences, the day after a war ended, Iraq would become America's problem, for practical and political reasons. Because we would have destroyed the political order and done physical damage in the

process, the claims on American resources and attention would be comparable to those of any U.S. state. Conquered Iraqis would turn to the U.S. government for emergency relief, civil order, economic reconstruction, and protection of their borders. They wouldn't be able to vote in U.S. elections, of course—although they might after they emigrated. (Every American war has created a refugee-and-immigrant stream.) But they would be part of us.

During the debate about whether to go to war, each side selectively used various postwar possibilities to bolster its case. Through the course of my interviews I found it useful to consider the possibilities as one comprehensive group. What follows is a triage list for American occupiers: the biggest problems they would face on the first day after the war, in the first week, and so on, until, perhaps decades from now, they could come to grips with the long-term connections between Iraq and the United States.

THE FIRST DAY

Last-minute mayhem. The biggest concern on the first day of peace would arise from what happened in the last few days of war. "I don't think that physically controlling the important parts of the country need be as difficult as many people fear," Chris Sanders, an American who worked for eighteen years in Saudi Arabia and is now a consultant in London, told me. "But of course it all depends on how one finds oneself in a victorious position—on what you had to do to win."

What would Saddam Hussein, facing defeat and perhaps death, have decided late in the war to do with the stock-piled weapons of mass destruction that were the original justification for our attack? The various Pentagon battle plans leaked to the media all assume that Iraq would use chemical weapons against U.S. troops. (Biological weapons work too slowly, and a nuclear weapon, if Iraq had one, would be more valuable for mass urban destruction than for battlefield use.) During the buildup to the Gulf War, American officials publicly warned Iraq that if it used chemical weapons against U.S. troops, we would respond with everything at our disposal, presumably including nuclear weapons. Whether or not this was a bluff, Iraq did not use chemical weapons. But if Saddam were fighting for survival, rather than for control of Kuwait, his decisions might be different.

The major chemical weapons in Iraqi arsenals are thought to be the nerve gas sarin, also called "GB," and liquid methylphosphonothioic acid, or "VX." Both can be absorbed through the lungs, the skin, or the eyes, and can cause death from amounts as small as one drop. Sarin disperses quickly, but VX is relatively nonvolatile and can pose a more lasting danger. U.S. troops would be equipped with protective suits, but these are cumbersome and retain heat; the need to wear them has been an argument for delaying an attack until winter.

Another concern is that on his way down Saddam would use chemical weapons not only tactically, to slow or kill attacking U.S. soldiers, but also strategically, to lash out beyond his borders. In particular, he could use them against Israel. Iraq's SCUD and "al-Hussein" missiles cannot reach Europe or North America. But Israel is in easy range—as Iraq demonstrated during the Gulf War, when it launched forty-two SCUDs against Israel. (It also launched more than forty against the allied troops; all these SCUDs had conventional explosive warheads, rather than chemical payloads.) During the Gulf War the Israeli government of Yitzhak Shamir complied with urgent U.S. requests that it leave all retaliation to the Americans, rather than broadening the war by launching its own attacks. Nothing in Ariel Sharon's long career suggests that he could be similarly restrained.

A U.S. occupation of Iraq, then, could begin with the rest of the Middle East at war around it. "What's the worst nightmare at the start?" a retired officer who fought in the Gulf War asked me rhetorically. "Saddam Hussein hits Israel, and Sharon hits some Arab city, maybe in Saudi Arabia. Then

you have the all-out religious war that the Islamic fundamentalists and maybe some Likudniks are itching for."

This is more a worst-case prediction than a probability, so let's assume that any regional combat could be contained and that we would get relatively quickly to the challenges of the following, postwar days.

THE FIRST WEEK

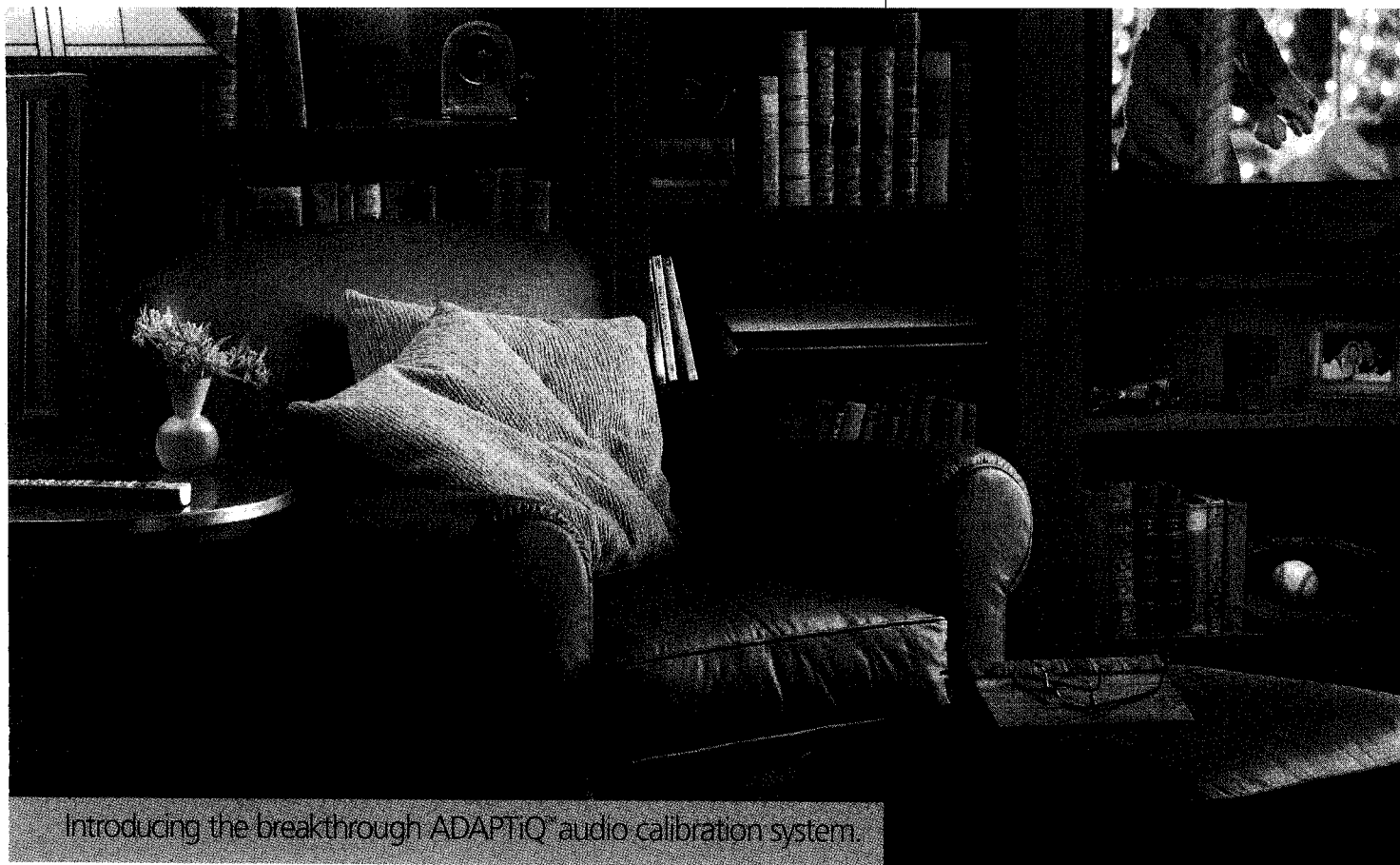
Refugees and relief. However quick and surgical the battle might seem to the American public, however much brighter Iraq's long-term prospects might become, in the short term many Iraqis would be desperate. Civilians would have been killed, to say nothing of soldiers. Bodies would need to be buried, wounds dressed, orphans located and cared for, hospitals staffed.

"You are going to start right out with a humanitarian crisis," says William Nash, of the Council on Foreign Relations. A retired two-star Army general, Nash was in charge of post-combat relief operations in southern Iraq after the Gulf War and later served in Bosnia and Kosovo. Most examples in this article, from Nash and others, involve the occupation of Kuwait and parts of Iraq after the Gulf War, rather than ongoing operations in Afghanistan. The campaign in Afghanistan may have a rhetorical connection to a future war in Iraq, in that both are part of the general "war on terror"; but otherwise the circumstances are very different. Iraq and Afghanistan are unlike in scale, geography, history, and politics, not to mention in the U.S. objectives and military plans that relate to them. And enough time has passed to judge the effects of the Gulf War, which is not true of Afghanistan.

"In the drive to Baghdad, you are going to do a lot of damage," Nash told me. "Either you will destroy a great deal of infrastructure by trying to isolate the battlefield—or they will destroy it, trying to delay your advance." Postwar commerce and recovery in Iraq will depend, of course, on roads, the rail system, air fields, and bridges across the Tigris and the Euphrates—facilities that both sides in the war will have incentives to blow up. "So you've got to find the village elders," Nash continued, "and say, 'Let's get things going. Where are the wells? I can bring you food, but bringing you enough water is really hard.' Right away you need food, water, and shelter—these people have to survive. Because you started the war, you have accepted a moral responsibility for them. And you may well have totally obliterated the social and political structure that had been providing these services."

Most of the military and diplomatic figures I interviewed stressed the same thing. In August, Scott Feil, a retired Army colonel who now directs a study project for the Association of the United States Army on postwar reconstruction, said at a Senate hearing, "I think the international community will hold the United States primarily responsible for the outcome in the post-conflict reconstruction effort." Charles William Maynes, a former editor of *Foreign Policy* magazine and now the president of the Eurasia Foundation, told me, "Because

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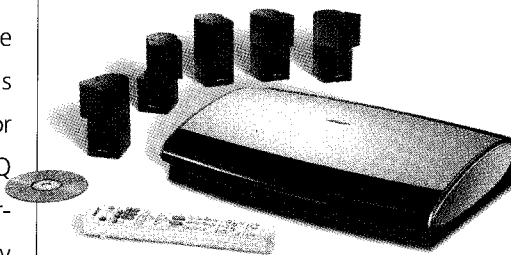


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of the allegations that we've been killing women and children over the years with the sanctions, we are going to be all the more responsible for restoring the infrastructure."

This is not impossible, but it is expensive. Starting in the first week, whoever is in charge in Iraq would need food, tents, portable hospitals, water-purification systems, generators, and so on. During the Clinton Administration, Frederick Barton directed the Office of Transition Initiatives at USAID, which worked with State and Defense Department representatives on postwar recovery efforts in countries such as Haiti, Liberia, and Bosnia. He told me, "These places typically have no revenue systems, no public funds, no way anybody at any level of governance can do anything right away. You've got to pump money into the system." Exactly how much is hard to say. Scott Feil has estimated that costs for the first year in Iraq would be about \$16 billion for post-conflict security forces and \$1 billion for reconstruction—presumably all from the United States, because of the lack of allies in the war.

Catching Saddam Hussein. While the refugees were being attended to, an embarrassing leftover problem might persist. From the U.S. perspective, it wouldn't really matter whether the war left Saddam dead, captured, or in exile. What would matter is that his whereabouts were known. The only outcome nearly as bad as leaving him in power would be having him at large, like Osama bin Laden and much of the al Qaeda leadership in the months after the September 11 attacks.

"My nightmare scenario,"

Merrill McPeak, the former Air Force chief of staff, told me, "is that we jump people in, seize the airport, bring in the 101st [Airborne Division]—and we can't find Saddam Hussein. Then we've got Osama and Saddam Hussein out there, both of them achieving mythical heroic status in the Arab world just by surviving. It's not a trivial problem to actually grab the guy, and it ain't over until you've got him in handcuffs."

During the Gulf War, McPeak and his fellow commanders learned that Saddam was using a fleet of Winnebago-like vehicles to move around Baghdad. They tried to track the vehicles but never located Saddam himself. As McPeak concluded from reading psychological profiles of the Iraqi dictator, he is not only a thug and a murderer but an extremely clever adversary. "My concern is that he is smarter individually than our bureaucracy is collectively," he told me. "Bureaucracies tend to dumb things down. So in trying to find him, we have a chess match between a bureaucracy and Saddam Hussein."



THE FIRST MONTH

Police control, manpower, and intelligence. When the lid comes off after a long period of repression, people may be grateful and elated. But they may also be furious and vengeful, as the post-liberation histories of Romania and Kosovo indicate. Phebe Marr, a veteran Iraq expert who until her retirement taught at the National Defense University, told a Senate committee in August, "If firm leadership is not in place in Baghdad the day after Saddam is removed, retribution, score settling, and bloodletting, especially in urban areas, could take place." William Nash, who supervised Iraqi prisoners in liberated parts of Kuwait, told me, "The victim becomes the aggressor. You try to control it, but you'll just find the bodies in the morning."

Some policing of conquered areas, to minimize warlordism and freelance justice, is an essential step toward making the postwar era seem like an occupation rather than simple chaos. Doing it right requires enough people to do the policing; a reliable way to understand local feuds and tensions; and a plan for creating and passing power to a local constabulary. Each can be more complicated than it sounds.

Simply manning a full occupation force would be a challenge. In the occupation business there are some surprising rules of thumb. Whether a country is big or small, for instance, the surrender of weapons by the defeated troops seems to take about 120 days. Similarly, regardless of a country's size, maintaining order seems to take about one occu-

pation soldier or police officer for each 500 people—plus one supervisor for each ten policemen. For Iraq's 23 million people that would mean an occupation force of about 50,000. Scott Feil told a Senate committee that he thought the occupation would need 75,000 security soldiers.

In most of its military engagements since Vietnam the United States has enthusiastically passed many occupation duties to allied or United Nations forces. Ideally the designated occupiers of Iraq would be other Arabs—similar rather than alien to most Iraqis in language, religion, and ethnicity. But persuading other countries to clean up after a war they had opposed would be quite a trick.

Providing even 25,000 occupiers on a sustained basis would not be easy for the U.S. military. Over the past decade the military's head count has gone down, even as its level of foreign commitment and the defense budget have gone up. All the active-duty forces together total about 1.4

million people. Five years ago it was about 1.5 million. At the time of the Gulf War the total was over two million. With fewer people available, the military's "ops tempo" (essentially, the level of overtime) has risen, dramatically in the past year. Since the terrorist attacks some 40,000 soldiers who had planned to retire or leave the service have been obliged to stay, under "stop-loss" personnel policies. In July the Army awarded a \$205 million contract to ITT Federal Services to provide "rent-a-cop" security guards for U.S. bases in Bosnia, sparing soldiers the need to stand guard duty. As of the beginning of September the number of National Guard and Reserves soldiers mobilized by federal call-ups was about 80,000, compared with about 5,600 just before September 11, 2001. For the country in general the war in Central Asia has been largely a spectator event—no war bonds, no gasoline taxes, no mandatory public service. For the volunteer military on both active and reserve duty it has been quite real.

One way to put more soldiers in Iraq would be to re-deploy them from overseas bases. Before the attacks about 250,000 soldiers were based outside U.S. borders, more than half of them in Germany, Japan, and Korea. The American military now stations more than 118,000 soldiers in Europe alone.

AN EMBARRASSING LEFTOVER PROBLEM MIGHT PERSIST. THE ONLY OUTCOME NEARLY AS BAD AS LEAVING SADDAM IN POWER WOULD BE HAVING HIM AT LARGE, LIKE OSAMA BIN LADEN AND MUCH OF THE AL QAEDA LEADERSHIP IN THE MONTHS AFTER THE SEPTEMBER 11 ATTACKS.

But in the short term the occupation would need people from the civil-affairs specialties of the military: people trained in setting up courts and police systems, restoring infrastructure, and generally leading a war-recovery effort. Many are found in the Reserves, and many have already been deployed to missions in Bosnia, Kosovo, or elsewhere. "These are an odd bunch of people," James Dunnigan, the editor of Strategy page.com, told me. "They tend to be civilians who are over-educated—they like working for the government and having adventures at the same time. They're like the characters in *Three Kings*, without finding the gold."

One of the people Dunnigan was referring to specifically is Evan Brooks. In his normal life Brooks is an attorney at Internal Revenue Service headquarters. He is also an amateur military historian, and until his recent retirement was a lieutenant colonel in the Army Reserves, specializing in civil affairs. "Between 1947 and 1983," Brooks told me, "the number of civil-affairs units that were activated [from the Reserves] could be counted on one hand. Since 1987 there has not been a single Christmas where the D.C.-area civil-affairs unit has not had people deployed overseas." Brooks was the military interface with the Kuwaiti Red Crescent for several months after the Gulf War; though he is Jewish, he became a popular figure among his Muslim colleagues, and

was the only American who attended Kuwaiti subcabinet meetings. "My ambition was to be military governor of Basra [the Iraqi region closest to Kuwait]," he told me, "I think whimsically. 'I never quite achieved it.'"

Wherever the occupying force finds its manpower, it will face the challenge of understanding politics and rivalries in a country whose language few Americans speak. The CIA and the Army Special Forces have been recruiting Arabic speakers and grilling Iraqi exiles for local intelligence. The Pentagon's leadership includes at least one Arabic speaker: the director of the joint staff, John Abizaid, a three-star general. As a combat commander during the Gulf War, Abizaid was able to speak directly with Iraqis. Most American occupiers will lack this skill.

Inability to communicate could be disastrous. After the Gulf War, William Nash told me, he supervised camps containing Iraqi refugees and captured members of the Republican Guard. "We had a couple of near riots—mini-riots—in the refugee camps when Saddam's agents were believed to have infiltrated," Nash said. "We brought a guy in, and a group of refugees in the camp went berserk. Somebody said, 'He's an agent!' My guys had to stop them or they were going to tear the man to shreds. We put a bag over his head and hustled him out of there, just to save his

life. And when that happens, you have no idea what kind of vendetta you've just fallen in the middle of. You have no idea if it's a six-camel issue or something much more. I take that experience from 1991 and square it fifty times for a larger country. That would be a postwar Iraq."

Eventually the occupiers would solve the problem by fostering a local police force, as part of a new Iraqi government. "You have to start working toward local, civilian-led police," Frederick Barton, the former USAID official, told me. "Setting up an academy is okay, but national police forces tend to be sources of future coups and corruption. I'd rather have a hundred and fifty small forces around the country and take my chances on thirty of them being corrupt than have a centralized force and end up with one big, bad operation."

Forming a government. Tyrants make a point of crushing any challenge to their power. When a tyranny falls, therefore, a new, legitimate source of authority may take time to emerge. If potential new leaders are easy to identify, it is usually because of their family name or record of political struggle. Corazón Aquino illustrates the first possibility: as the widow of a political rival whom Ferdinand Marcos had ordered killed, she was the ideal successor to Marcos in the

Philippines (despite her later troubles in office). Charles de Gaulle in postwar France, Nelson Mandela in South Africa, and Kim Dae-jung in South Korea illustrate the second. Should the Burmese military ever fall, Aung San Suu Kyi will have both qualifications for leadership.

Iraq has no such obvious sources of new leadership. A word about its political history is useful in explaining the succession problem. From the 1500s onward the Ottoman Empire, based in Istanbul, controlled the territory that is now Iraq. When the empire fell, after World War I, Great Britain assumed supervision of the newly created Kingdom of Iraq, under a mandate from the League of Nations. The British imported a member of Syria's Hashemite royal family, who in 1921 became King Faisal I of Iraq. (The Hashemites, one of whom is still on the throne in Jordan, claim descent not only from the prophet Muhammad but also from the Old Testament Abraham.) The Kingdom of Iraq lasted until 1958, when King Faisal II was overthrown and killed in a military coup. In 1963 the Baath, or "renewal," party took power in another coup—which the United States initially welcomed, in hopes that the Baathists would be anticommunist. By the late 1970s Saddam Hussein had risen to dominance within the party.

The former monarchy is too shallow-rooted to survive reintroduction to Iraq, and Saddam has had time to eliminate nearly all sources of internal resistance. The Kurdish chieftains of the northern provinces are the primary exception. But their main impulse has been separatist: they seek autonomy from the government in Baghdad and feud with one another. That leaves Iraqi exile groups—especially the Iraqi National Congress—as the likeliest suppliers of leaders.

The INC survives on money from the U.S. government. The organization and its president, a U.S.-trained businessman named Ahmad Chalabi, have sincere supporters and also detractors within the Washington policy world. The columnist Jim Hoagland, of *The Washington Post*, has called Chalabi a "dedicated advocate of democracy" who has "sacrifice[d] most of his fortune so he can risk his life to fight Saddam." The case against Chalabi involves his fortune too: he is a high-living character, and under him the INC has been dogged by accusations of financial mismanagement. "The opposition outside Iraq is almost as divided, weak, and irrelevant as the White Russians in the 1920s," says Anthony Cordesman, of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, in Washington.

"What you will need is a man with a black moustache," a retired British spy who once worked in the region told me. "Out of chaos I am sure someone will emerge. But it can't be Chalabi, and it probably won't be a democracy. Democracy is a strange fruit, and, cynically, to hold it together in the short term you need a strongman."

Several U.S. soldiers told me that the comfortable Powell doctrine, with its emphasis on swift action and a clear exit strategy, could make the inevitable difficulty and delay in

setting up plausible new leadership even more frustrating.

When British administrators supervised the former Ottoman lands in the 1920s, they liked to insinuate themselves into the local culture, à la Lawrence of Arabia. "Typically, a young man would go there in his twenties, would master the local dialects, would have a local mistress before he settled down to something more respectable," Victor O'Reilly, an Irish novelist who specializes in military topics, told me. "They were to achieve tremendous amounts with minimal resources. They ran huge chunks of the world this way, and it was psychological. They were hugely knowledgeable and got deeply involved with the locals." The original Green Berets tried to use a version of this approach in Vietnam, and to an extent it is still the ideal for the Special Forces.

But in the generation since Vietnam the mainstream U.S. military has gone in the opposite direction: toward a definition of its role in strictly martial terms. It is commonplace these days in discussions with officers to hear them describe their mission as "killing people and blowing things up." The phrase is used deliberately to shock civilians, and also for its absolute clarity as to what a "military response" involves. If this point is understood, there can be no confusion about what the military is supposed to do when a war starts, no recriminations when it uses all necessary force, and as little risk as possible that soldiers will die "political" deaths because they've been constrained for symbolic or diplomatic reasons from fully defending themselves. All this is in keeping with the more familiar parts of the Powell doctrine—the insistence on political backing and overwhelming force. The goal is to protect the U.S. military from being misused.

The strict segregation of military and political functions may be awkward in Iraq, however. In the short term the U.S. military would necessarily be the government of Iraq. In the absence of international allies or UN support, and the absence of an obvious Iraqi successor regime, American soldiers would have to make and administer political decisions on the fly. America's two most successful occupations embraced the idea that military officials must play political roles. Emperor Hirohito remained the titular head of state in occupied Japan, but Douglas MacArthur, a lifelong soldier, was immersed in the detailed reconstruction of Japan's domestic order. In occupied Germany, General Lucius D. Clay did something comparable, though less flamboyantly. Today's Joint Chiefs of Staff would try to veto any suggestion for a MacArthur-like proconsul. U.S. military leaders in the Balkans have pushed this role onto the United Nations. Exactly who could assume it in Iraq is not clear.

In the first month, therefore, the occupiers would face a paradox: the institution best equipped to exercise power as a local government—the U.S. military—would be the one most reluctant to do so.

Territorial integrity. This is where the exercise of power might first be put to a major test.

In ancient times what is now central Iraq was the cradle of civilization, Mesopotamia (“Mespot” in Fleet Street shorthand during the British-mandate era). Under the Ottoman Empire today’s Iraq was not one province but three, and the divisions still affect current politics. The province of Baghdad, in the center of the country, is the stronghold of Iraq’s Sunni Muslim minority. Sunnis dominated administrative positions in the Ottoman days and have controlled the army and the government ever since, even though they make up only about 20 percent of the population. The former province of Mosul, in the mountainous north, is the stronghold of Kurdish tribes, which make up 15 to 20 percent of the population. Through the years they have both warred against and sought common cause with other Kurdish tribes across Iraq’s borders in Turkey, Iran, and Syria. Mosul also has some of the country’s richest reserves of oil. The former province of Basra, to the southeast, borders Iran, Kuwait, and the Persian Gulf. Its population is mainly Shiite Muslims, who make up the majority in the country as a whole but have little political power.

The result of this patchwork is a country like Indonesia or Soviet-era Yugoslavia. Geographic, ethnic, and religious forces tend to pull it apart; only an offsetting pull from a strong central government keeps it in one piece. Most people

pine archipelago, but because the islands have no land frontier with another country, domestic tensions could be managed with few international complications. And in dealing with Japan and Germany after World War II, the United States wanted, if anything, to dilute each country’s sense of distinct national identity. There was also no doubt about the boundaries of those occupied countries.

Postwar Iraq, in contrast, would have less-than-certain boundaries, internal tensions with international implications, and highly nervous neighbors. Six countries share borders with Iraq. Clockwise from the Persian Gulf, they are Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria, Turkey, and Iran. None of them has wanted Saddam to expand Iraq’s territory. But they would be oddly threatened by a post-Saddam breakup or implosion. The Turks, as noted, have a particular interest in preventing any country’s Kurdish minority from rebelling or forming a separatist state. The monarchies of Saudi Arabia and Jordan fear that riots and chaos in Iraq could provoke similar upheaval among their own peoples.

“In states like the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, even Saudi Arabia,” says Shibley Telhami, the Anwar Sadat Professor of Peace and Development at the University of Maryland, “there is the fear that the complete demise of Iraq would in the long run play into the hands of Iran, which they see as

THE CENTRIFUGAL FORCES ACTING ON POSTWAR IRAQ WOULD BE DIFFERENT FROM THE FORCES IN PAST U.S. OCCUPATIONS. POSTWAR IRAQ WOULD HAVE LESS-THAN-CERTAIN BOUNDARIES, INTERNAL TENSIONS WITH INTERNATIONAL IMPLICATIONS, AND HIGHLY NERVOUS NEIGHBORS.

think that under the stress of regime change Iraq would be more like Indonesia after Suharto than like Yugoslavia after Tito—troubled but intact. But the strains will be real.

“In my view it is very unlikely—indeed, inconceivable—that Iraq will break up into three relatively cohesive components,” Phebe Marr, the Iraq expert, told the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. But a weakened center could mean all sorts of problems, she said, even if the country were officially whole. The Kurds could seize the northern oil fields, for example. The Turkish government has long made clear that if Iraq cannot control its Kurdish population, Turkey—concerned about separatist movements in its own Kurdish provinces—will step in to do the job. “Turkey could intervene in the north, as it has done before,” Marr said. “Iran, through its proxies, could follow suit. There could even be a reverse flow of refugees as many Iraqi Shia exiles in Iran return home, possibly in the thousands, destabilizing areas in the south.”

The centrifugal forces acting on postwar Iraq, even if they did not actually break up the country, would present a situation different from those surrounding past U.S. occupations. America’s longest experience as an occupier was in the Philippines, which the United States controlled formally or informally for most of a century. Many ethnic, linguistic, and religious differences separated the people of the Philip-

even more of a threat.” Iran is four times as large as Iraq, and has nearly three times as many people. Although it is Islamic, its population and heritage are Persian, not Arab; to the Arab states, Iran is “them,” not “us.”

As Arab regimes in the region assess the possible outcomes of a war, Telhami says, “they see instability, at a minimum, for a long period of time, and in the worst case the disintegration of the Iraqi state.” These fears matter to the United States, because of oil. Chaos in the Persian Gulf would disrupt world oil markets and therefore the world economy. Significant expansion of Iran’s influence, too, would work against the Western goal of balancing regional power among Saudi Arabia, Iran, and postwar Iraq. So as the dust of war cleared, keeping Iraq together would suddenly be America’s problem. If the Kurds rebelled in the north, if the Shiite government in Iran tried to “reclaim” the southern districts of Iraq in which fellow Shiites live, the occupation powers would have to respond—even by sending in U.S. troops for follow-up battles.

THE FIRST YEAR

“De-Nazification” and “loya-jirgazon.” As the months pass, an occupation force should, according to former occupiers, spend less time reacting to crises and more time undertaking long-term projects such as improving schools, hospitals, and hous-

ing. Iraq's occupiers would meanwhile also have to launch their version of "de-Nazification": identifying and punishing those who were personally responsible for the old regime's brutality, without launching a Khmer Rouge-style purge of everyone associated with the former government. Depending on what happened to Saddam and his closest associates, war-crime trials might begin. Even if the United States had carried out the original invasion on its own, the occupiers would seek international support for these postwar measures.

In the early months the occupiers would also begin an Iraqi version of "*loya-jirgization*"—that is, supporting a "grand council" or convention like the one at which the Afghans selected the leadership for their transitional government. Here the occupation would face a fundamental decision about its goals within Iraq.

One option was described to me by an American diplomat as the "decent interval" strategy. The United States would help to set up the framework for a new governing system and then transfer authority to it as soon as possible—whether or not the new regime was truly ready to exercise control. This is more or less the approach the United States and its allies have taken in Afghanistan: once the *loya jirga* had set up an interim government and Hamid Karzai was in place as President, the United States was happy to act as if this were a true government. The situation in Afghanistan shows the contradictions in this strategy. It works only if the United States decides it doesn't care about the Potemkin government's lapses and limitations—for instance, an inability to suppress warlords and ethnic-regional feuds. In Afghanistan the United States still does care, so there is growing tension between the pretense of Afghan sovereignty and the reality of U.S. influence. However complicated the situation in Afghanistan is proving to be, things are, again, likely to be worse in Iraq. The reasons are familiar: a large local army, the Northern Alliance, had played a major role in the fight against the Taliban; a natural leader, Karzai, was available; the invasion itself had been a quasi-international rather than a U.S.-only affair.

The other main option would be something closer to U.S. policy in occupied Japan: a slow, thorough effort to change fundamental social and cultural values, in preparation for a sustainable democracy. Japan's version of democracy departs from the standard Western model in various ways, but a system even half as open and liberal as Japan's would be

a huge step for Iraq. The transformation of Japan was slow. It required detailed interference in the day-to-day workings of Japanese life. U.S. occupation officials supervised what was taught in Japanese classrooms. Douglas MacArthur's assistants not only rewrote the labor laws but wrote the constitution itself. They broke up big estates and reallocated the land. Carrying out this transformation required an effort comparable to the New Deal. American lawyers, economists, engineers, and administrators by the thousands spent years developing and executing reform plans. Transformation did not happen by fiat. It won't in Iraq either.

John Dower, a professor of history at MIT, is a leading historian of the U.S. occupation of Japan; his book *Embracing Defeat* won the Pulitzer Prize for nonfiction in 2000. Dower points out that in Japan occupation officials had a huge advantage they presumably would not have in Iraq: no

one questioned their legitimacy. The victorious Americans had not only the power to impose their will on Japan but also, in the world's eyes, the undoubted right to remake a militarist society. "Every country in Asia wanted this to be done," Dower says. "Every country in the world." The same was true in postwar Germany. The absence of international support today is one of many reasons Dower vehemently opposes a pre-emptive attack.

Oil and money. Iraq could be the Saudi Arabia of the future. Partly because its output has been constrained by ten years' worth of sanctions, and mainly because it has never embraced

the international oil industry as Saudi Arabia has, it is thought to have some of the largest untapped reserves in the world. Saudi Arabia now exports much more oil than Iraq—some seven million barrels a day versus about two million. But Iraq's output could rapidly increase.

The supply-demand balance in the world's energy markets is expected to shift over the next five years. Import demand continues to rise—even more quickly in China and India than in the United States. Production in most of the world is flat or declining—in OPEC producing countries, by OPEC fiat. The role of Persian Gulf suppliers will only become more important; having two large suppliers in the Gulf rather than just one will be a plus for consumers. So in the Arab world the U.S. crusade against Saddam looks to be motivated less by fears of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction than by the wish to defend Israel and the desire for oil.

Ideally, Iraq's re-entry into the world oil market would



be smooth. Production would be ramped up quickly enough to generate money to rebuild the Iraqi economy and infrastructure, but gradually enough to keep Saudi Arabia from feeling threatened and retaliating in ways that could upset the market. International oil companies, rather than an occupation authority, would do most of the work here. What would the occupiers need to think about? First, the threat of sabotage, which would become greater to the extent that Iraq's oil industry was seen in the Arab world more as a convenience for Western consumers than as a source of wealth for Iraq. Since many of the wells are in the Kurdish regions, Kurdish rebellion or dissatisfaction could put them at risk. Oil pipelines, seemingly so exposed, are in fact not the likeliest target. "Pipes are always breaking, so we know how to fix them quickly," says Peter Schwartz, of the Global Business Network, who worked for years as an adviser to Shell Oil. At greatest risk are the terminals at seaports, where oil is loaded into tankers, and the wells themselves. At the end of the Gulf War, Iraqi troops set fire to 90 percent of Kuwait's wells, which burned for months. Wellheads and terminals are the sites that oil companies protect most carefully.

Another challenge to recovery prospects in general would be Iraq's amazingly heavy burden of debt. Iraq was

of that cost reimbursed. An assault on Iraq would be at least as expensive and would all be on our tab. Add to that the price of recovery aid. It is hard to know even how to estimate the total cost.

Legitimacy and unilateralism. An important premise for the American war party is that squawks and hand-wringing from Arab governments cannot be taken seriously. The Saudis may say they oppose an attack; the Jordanians may publicly warn against it; but in fact most governments in the region would actually be glad to have the Saddam wild card removed. And if some countries didn't welcome the outcome, all would adjust to the reality of superior U.S. force once the invasion was a fait accompli. As for the Europeans, they are thought to have a poor record in threat assessment. Unlike the United States, Europe has not really been responsible since World War II for life-and-death judgments about military problems, and Europeans tend to whine and complain. American war advocates say that Europe's reluctance to confront Saddam is like its reluctance to recognize the Soviet threat a generation ago. Europeans thought Ronald Reagan was a brute for calling the Soviet Union an "evil empire." According to this view, they are just as wrong-headed to consider George W.

BECAUSE WE WOULD HAVE DESTROYED THE POLITICAL ORDER AND DONE PHYSICAL DAMAGE IN THE PROCESS, IRAQ'S CLAIMS ON AMERICAN RESOURCES WOULD BE COMPARABLE TO THOSE OF ANY U.S. STATE. CONQUERED IRAQIS WOULD BE PART OF US.

directed by the United Nations to pay reparations for the damage it inflicted on Kuwait during the Gulf War. That and other debts have compounded to amounts the country cannot hope to repay. Estimates vary, but the range—\$200 billion to \$400 billion—illustrates the problem.

"Leaving Iraq saddled with a massive debt and wartime-reparations bill because of Saddam is an act of moral and ethical cowardice," says Anthony Cordesman, of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a military expert who is no one's idea of a bleeding heart. "We must show the Arab and Islamic worlds that we will not profiteer in any way from our victory. We must persuade the world to forgive past debts and reparations." Cordesman and others argue that as part of regime change the United States would have to take responsibility for solving this problem. Otherwise Iraq would be left in the position of Weimar Germany after the Treaty of Versailles: crushed by unpayable reparations.

This would be only part of the financial reality of regime change. The overall cost of U.S. military operations during the Gulf War came to some \$61 billion. Because of the contributions it received from Japan, Saudi Arabia, and other countries in its alliance, the United States wound up in the convenient yet embarrassing position of having most

Bush a simpleton for talking today about an "axis of evil."

Still, support from the rest of the world can be surprisingly comforting. Most Americans were moved by the outpouring of solidarity on September 11—the flowers in front of embassies, the astonishing headline in *Le Monde*: "*NOUS SOMMES TOUS AMÉRICAINS*." By the same token, foreigners' hatred can be surprisingly demoralizing. Think of the news clips of exaltation in Palestinian camps after the attacks, or the tape of Osama bin Laden chortling about how many people he had killed. The United States rarely turned to the United Nations from the late 1960s through the mid-1980s, because the UN was so often a forum for anti-American rants. Resentment against America in the Arab world has led to a partial boycott of U.S. exports, which so far has not mattered much. It has also fueled the recruitment of suicide terrorists, which has mattered a great deal.

The presence or absence of allies would have both immediate and long-term consequences for the occupation. No matter how welcome as liberators they may be at first, foreign soldiers eventually wear out their welcome. It would be far easier if this inescapably irritating presence were varied in nationality, under a UN flag, rather than all American. All the better if the force were Islamic and Arabic-speaking.

The face of the occupying force will matter not just in

Iraq's cities but also on its borders. Whoever controls Iraq will need to station forces along its most vulnerable frontier—the long flank with Iran, where at least half a million soldiers died during the 1980–1988 Iran–Iraq war. The Iranians will notice any U.S. presence on the border. “As the occupying power, we will be responsible for the territorial integrity of the Iraqi state,” says Charles William Maynes, of the Eurasia Foundation. “That means we will have to move our troops to the border with Iran. At that point Iran becomes our permanent enemy.”

The longer-term consequences would flow from having undertaken a war that every country in the region except Israel officially opposed. Chris Sanders, the consultant who used to work in Saudi Arabia, says that unless the United States can drum up some Arab allies, an attack on Iraq “will accomplish what otherwise would have been impossible—a bloc of regional opposition that transcends the very real differences of interests and opinions that had kept a unified Arab bloc from arising,” Sanders adds dryly, “If I were an American strategic thinker, I would imagine that not to be in my interest.”

THE LONG RUN

So far we've considered the downside—which, to be fair, is most of what I heard in my interviews. But there was also a distinctly positive theme, and it came from some of the most dedicated members of the war party. Their claim, again, was that forcing regime change would not just have a negative virtue—that of removing a threat. It would also create the possibility of bringing to Iraq, and eventually the whole Arab world, something it has never known before: stable democracy in an open-market system.

“This could be a golden opportunity to begin to change the face of the Arab world,” James Woolsey, a former CIA director who is one of the most visible advocates of war, told me. “Just as what we did in Germany changed the face of Central and Eastern Europe, here we have got a golden chance.” In this view, the fall of the Soviet empire really did mark what Francis Fukuyama called “the end of history”: the democratic-capitalist model showed its superiority over other social systems. The model has many local variations; it brings adjustment problems; and it encounters resistance, such as the anti-globalization protests of the late 1990s. But it spreads—through the old Soviet territory, through Latin America and Asia, nearly everywhere except through tragic Africa and the Islamic-Arab lands of the Middle East. To think that Arab states don't want a democratic future is dehumanizing. To think they're incapable of it is worse. What is required is a first Arab democracy, and Iraq can be the place.

“If you only look forward, you can see how hard it would be to do,” Woolsey said. “Everybody can say, ‘Oh, sure, you're going to democratize the Middle East.’” Indeed, that was the reaction of most of the diplomats, spies, and soldiers I spoke with—“the ruminations of insane people,” one British official said.

Woolsey continued with his point: “But if you look at what we and our allies have done with the three world wars of the twentieth century—two hot, one cold—and what we've done in the interstices, we've already achieved this for two thirds of the world. Eighty-five years ago, when we went into World War I, there were eight or ten democracies at the time. Now it's around a hundred and twenty—some free, some partly free. An order of magnitude! The compromises we made along the way, whether allying with Stalin or Franco or Pinochet, we have gotten around to fixing, and their successor regimes are democracies.

“Around half of the states of sub-Saharan Africa are democratic. Half of the twenty-plus non-Arab Muslim states. We have all of Europe except Belarus and occasionally parts of the Balkans. If you look back at what has happened in less than a century, then getting the Arab world plus Iran moving in the same direction looks a lot less awesome. It's not Americanizing the world. It's Athenizing it. And it is doable.”

Richard Perle, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and others have presented similar prospects. Thomas McNerney, a retired three-star general, said at the Senate hearings this past summer, “Our longer-term objectives will be to bring a democratic government to Iraq ... that will influence the region significantly.” At a Pentagon briefing a few days later Rumsfeld asked rhetorically, “Wouldn't it be a wonderful thing if Iraq were similar to Afghanistan—if a bad regime was thrown out, people were liberated, food could come in, borders could be opened, repression could stop, prisons could be opened? I mean, it would be *fabulous*.”

The transforming vision is not, to put it mildly, the consensus among those with long experience in the Middle East. “It is so divorced from any historical context, just so far out of court, that it is laughable,” Chris Sanders told me. “There isn't a society in Iraq to turn into a democracy. That doesn't mean you can't set up institutions and put stooges in them. But it would make about as much sense as the South Vietnamese experiment did.” Others made similar points.

Woolsey and his allies might be criticized for lacking a tragic imagination about where war might lead, but at least they recognize that it will lead somewhere. If they are more optimistic in their conclusions than most of the other people I spoke with, they do see that America's involvement in Iraq would be intimate and would be long.

It has become a cliché in popular writing about the natural world that small disturbances to complex systems can have unpredictably large effects. The world of nations is perhaps not quite as intricate as the natural world, but it certainly holds the potential for great surprise. Merely itemizing the foreseeable effects of a war with Iraq suggests reverberations that would be felt for decades. If we can judge from past wars, the effects we can't imagine when the fighting begins will prove to be the ones that matter most. ■

James Fallows is a national correspondent for The Atlantic.

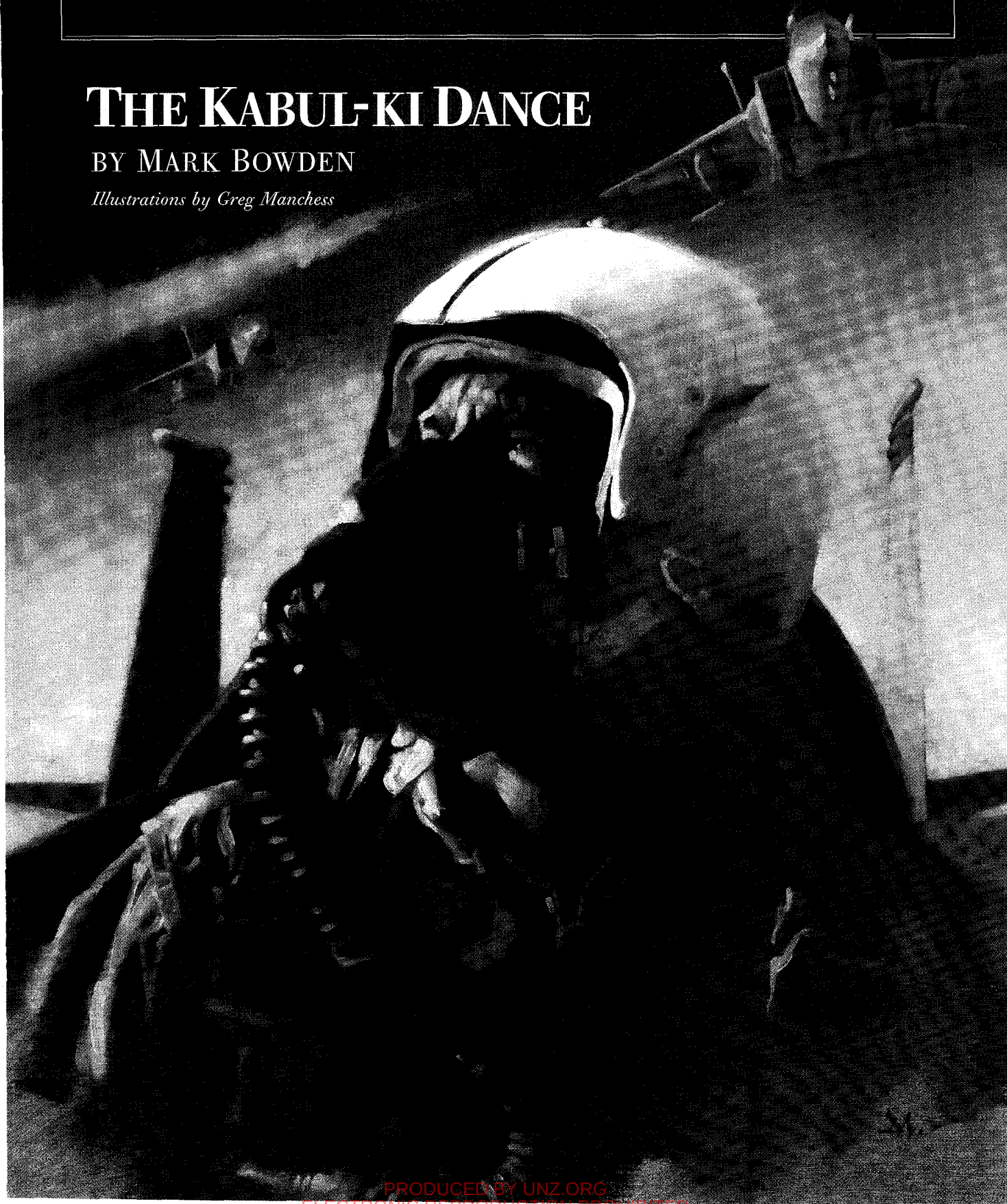
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THE KABUL-KI DANCE

BY MARK BOWDEN

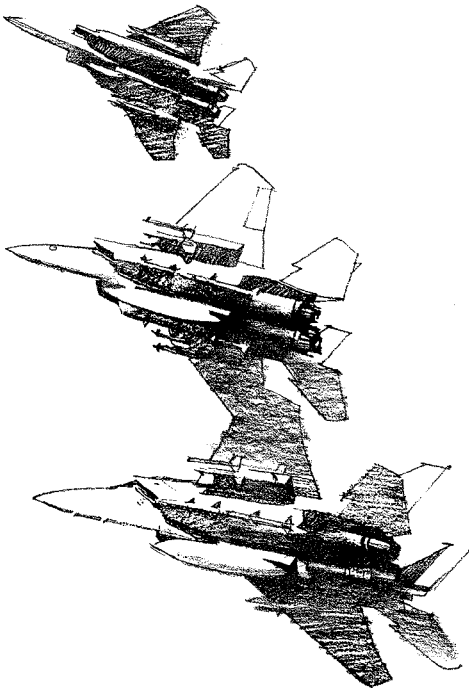
Illustrations by Greg Manchess



THE KABUL-KI DANCE

BY MARK BOWDEN

Inside the cockpit with the pilots and wizzos of the 391st Fighter Squadron, the top guns of America's air war in Afghanistan



One of the unadvertised downsides of being a god of the night sky, of delivering America's smartest bombs, of owning the twenty-first-century battlefield and then getting home in time to dine on surf 'n' turf and Häagen-Dazs and catch the latest episode of *Friends*, is the capability of the U.S. Air Force to record every word and image from the cockpit of your F-15 for digital playback. It's fine for showing off marksmanship and relishing derring-do; but some moments are not meant to be relived every time some wise-ass desk jock in the Mission Planning Cell, the MPC, cues up a certain audio file and punches a button on his keyboard.

"Holy shit! Missile launch!"

Heart in the throat, sphincter puckered, a trace of panic in the voice. It's a little embarrassing. It's the exact opposite of the purely utilitarian pilotese they teach in training.

"Holy shit! Missile launch!"

At war over Afghanistan, an Air Force captain called Snitch learned to live with the fact that his moment of genuine alarm had been preserved on audio. Snitch is one of the thirty-six crew members of the 391st Fighter Squadron, the Bold Tigers, a force of twelve F-15 Strike Eagles out of Mountain Home, Idaho. He is a slender, cheerful man in his early thirties, with brown eyes, short brown hair that looks as if it just came out from under a helmet, and freckles that still show under a dark tan. He grew up in Wisconsin, graduated from the Air Force Academy in 1992, and spent two years in Alaska as an Air Force criminal investigator. Hence his nickname. (The fliers in this story asked to be identified only by their call signs, to protect themselves and their families.) Snitch is a backseater, a weapons-systems officer, or "wizzo"—and something of a laser-guidance artist, so he's plenty secure with his skills. He also has a good sense of humor. But Snitch was annoyed to have his moment of panic become a squadron joke—especially the hundredth time he heard it. The fear was certainly defensible. Snitch knows pilotese and speaks it with the best of them, but the first time you see one of those surface-to-air *motherfuckers* corkscrewing up right at *you* ... well, something primitive takes over.

For Snitch the joke was also a point of pride. Not many of the other guys had to dodge SAMs in this war. Besides, the joke was useful. It reminded the entire squadron, whose members saw this engagement as the greatest turkey shoot of all time, that there were real hazards up there, and that the long stretches of cramped, tense routine in the bubble cockpits of their jets, where even traveling at the speed of sound could get tedious, demanded an unflagging vigilance.

"Holy shit! Missile launch!"

It happened like this:

Snitch and his pilot, Slokes, had been airborne for hours, doing what the fliers of the 391st call the Kabul-ki Dance, circling Kabul with the full force of the U.S. air armada. They had completed the long night flight to Afghanistan, after traveling down the Persian Gulf southeast from al Jaber (none of the Air Force personnel would disclose the location of their desert base outside Kuwait City, but it was widely reported during the conflict), avoiding Iran's airspace, rendezvousing with tankers over the Gulf of Oman to refuel, making a sharp left turn at Gwadar to cross over Pakistan and the great jagged peaks of the

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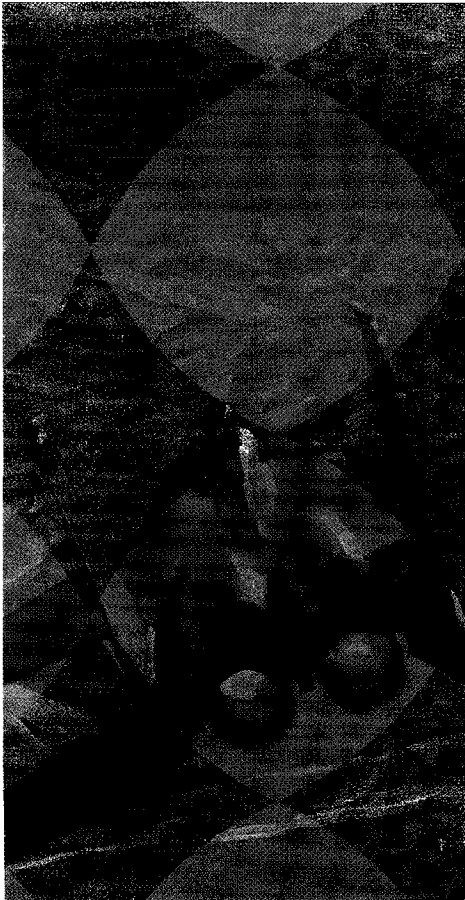
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Siahhan Range, and finally making their way northeast to Kabul. On daytime missions this same flight would reveal hours of dusty red-brown mountain ranges, miles and miles of hostile nothing, a seemingly endless expanse of saw-toothed ridges, a country harsher and emptier than any they had ever seen. On nighttime missions like this one they flew enveloped in darkness, under stars and a moon that seemed close enough to dodge. When they reached Kabul, in east-central Afghanistan, they joined the scores of American warplanes operating at various altitudes. At 20,000 feet the F-15s waited for “fraggged” targets from Boss Man, the Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircraft that choreographs the terribly complicated and dangerous dance of the modern air assault. A target is fragged when it is assigned to be hit. Depending on its importance and the potential for “collateral damage,” or civilian deaths (and thus political fallout), getting a target fragged may mean running all the way up the permission chain to the White House. On that mission Snitch and Slokes had already hit several targets and were given another, time-critical one: a SAM site just outside the city that had unwisely lobbed a missile into the dark sky full of American warplanes, revealing its position and thereby sealing its fate.

Their Strike Eagle, a sleek two-engine jet, the premier precision air-to-ground attack instrument in the U.S. arsenal, was still carrying five 500-pound laser-guided bombs, called GBU-12s (GBU stands for “guided bomb unit”), and Slokes and Snitch were still eager for a chance to lay into something. To be sent home carrying bombs was the worst. With comic futility Slokes would plead with Boss Man, “Please, sir, can I ask somebody else?” Nobody wanted to face the three-hour flight back to Kuwait with packages undelivered—it made the flight longer and burned fuel like crazy; and to face the crew that had worked like dogs to ready the aircraft, load the bombs, and paint love notes to Osama bin Laden and Mullah Mohammed Omar on the ordnance was a full-bore bummer.

Working with the AWACS coordinates, Snitch quickly located the SAM site in his target pod, and Slokes maneuvered the jet into the approach. They felt the familiar push of their backs into their seats, and the lurch of their guts against their spines, but both were much too busy to think about the discomfort. Snitch couldn’t have said if the jet was upside down or right side up. His nose was glued to the green of his eight-inch target monitor. Manipulating the laser with his hand control, he cleared Slokes to “pickle”—release the bomb. The pilot pressed the button that gives the jet final permission to drop a bomb once it has calculated the perfect trajectory, and fractions of a second later the thing was off. Slokes banked the jet to the left as Snitch, gently nudging his hand controller, kept the laser zeroed; his pod stays fixed on the target no matter how the jet moves. The bomb hit “shack on,” or dead center, and the SAM launcher vanished in a satisfactory black splash on the monitor. Job well done ... but then up out of the burning mess spiraled a missile that the GBU had evidently cooked right off the pad.

It was then that Snitch famously exclaimed, *“Holy shit! Missile launch!”*

Slokes immediately threw the jet off its course, and Snitch punched out some chaff and flares (the chaff distracts radar guidance, and the flares confuse a heat-seeker), after which ensued thirty weighty seconds—or, as Snitch puts it, “half the known age of the universe”—of listening to each other’s nervous breathing in the headphones, waiting to be torn into oblivion, until the pilot of a trailing jet commented, in perfect pilotese, “It burned out co-altitude.”

“Holy sheepshit!” Slokes said, breaking the silence.

“I got that in the pod, brother,” Snitch said, meaning that the event was digitally preserved and they could show it off later.

“Fuckin’ party!” Slokes said, deep into the euphoria of being shot at and missed.

Fun” is a word not often applied to warfare. It’s unseemly; you aren’t supposed to enjoy yourself while killing people. But the high-intensity enthusiasm of the Bold Tigers was unmistakable. They are young (most of them in their twenties), slender, fit, smart, patriotic, highly motivated, exhaustively trained, and crisply able. They are all in love with flight, with riding their silver bullets to the edges of the sky, peering down at the broad curvature of the earth, feeling the great surge of supersonic engines beneath them. Given the chance to show what they could do, taking on a cause that both inspired and excited them, and that added a tincture of danger to the heady mix ... it’s no wonder the pilots and wizzos of the 391st came to feel that this was the time of their lives.

What is most telling about Slokes and Snitch’s brush with danger is that it was memorable at all. The Bold Tigers trace their history back to the days of flying P-47s in combat over Europe in World War II. The unit has known times when being shot at was all too common, as was being shot at and hit. But the days of jousting with the enemy in the sky, of flirting daily with death in the clouds, are all but over—and have been for some time. At the dawn of World War II the French pilot and author Antoine de Saint-Exupéry was already mourning the flying duelists of the Great War and anticipating the tremendous bombing raids that would define the coming conflict. The fighter plane was being replaced by the flying truck, and war seemed to call less for aerial artistry than for the capacity to deliver or endure wave after wave of bombs. Saint-Exupéry could not have foreseen today’s conflicts, in which bombing has become an exercise in precision and fighter pilots (or, in the case of the Strike Eagles, fighter crews) are essentially technicians who—the close call of Snitch and Slokes notwithstanding—fight wars that are nearly stripped of passion and danger. Combat has become a procedure, deliberate and calculated, more cerebral than visceral—even if it does still have its moments. The modern American air war is almost never about air-to-air combat. Squadrons like the 391st now go to war virtually unopposed. Few nations have the capability to contest American fighters in the sky, and those that do would probably fare badly. Air warfare as practiced today by the U.S. military is about delivering weapons accurately and with impunity. The goal is to destroy an enemy’s ability to make war, with minimal risk above and minimal carnage and destruction below.

Given the ineffectiveness of surface-to-air missiles in recent conflicts, those on the receiving end of this juggernaut are left with few weapons. Perhaps the most powerful one, apart from suicidal acts of terror, is the world’s indignation. Victimhood affords the enemy a claim to higher moral ground. The shedding of enough innocent blood can eclipse the meaning of even the noblest cause. So civilian deaths are trumpeted by the enemy with each new air assault. Whether in Iraq, Bosnia, or Afghanistan, the number of casualties is often exaggerated. And yet Western journalists are given tours of shattered neighborhoods and villages, where images of real death, dismemberment, and grief counter the Pentagon’s antiseptic videos of guided bombs striking toy houses and cars. These images stir outrage in the United States and Europe and fuel the now familiar rear-guard American movements to stop such bombings and end such wars.

The astonishing precision of modern American weaponry deflates this outrage. Compared with other “bomb-delivery systems,” such as the old B-52s and the F-16 Falcons, the Bold Tigers in their Strike Eagles are artists of aerial bombardment. They worry less about being shot at than about missing their “dimpie,” or designated mean point of impact. Slokes subscribes to an adage he read in a history book about pilots in World War II, which goes, “God, please don’t let me fuck up ... but if I do, please don’t let me fuck up and live.”

B-52s—or “Buffys,” for “big ugly fat fuckers”—drop the less accurate, less smart joint direct attack munitions, or JDAMs. In the Afghanistan campaign they took

The fliers saw the engagement over Afghanistan as the greatest turkey shoot of all time. Yet the long stretches of cramped, tense routine in the bubble cockpits of their jets, where even traveling at the speed of sound could get tedious, demanded an unflagging vigilance.

The cockpit is tight. Fliers have enough room to stretch their legs forward, but not enough to raise their arms far over their heads. Fearing deep-vein thrombosis on such long flights, doctors teach the crews isometric exercises to perform in the cramped space.

off from Diego Garcia, an island in the Indian Ocean; cruised way up to somewhere in the “Bozosphere” (meaning “way the fuck up there”); and, visible from below only as bright white contrails, opened their bomb bays and let fly. They are the wholesale-delivery teams of the modern air-war industry. F-16s, direct heirs of the single-seat combat-fighter tradition, are sleek and cool, excellent for providing air cover for bombers—but there was no call for that over Afghanistan. The Bold Tigers affectionately call F-16s “Lawn Darts,” because that’s what they look like, because they carry relatively light loads, and because if their single engine fails, they perform a graceful nosedive straight into the ground.

In contrast, the Bold Tigers are hunters. They prowl around in shoulder-held-missile territory, skimming the terrain, looking, as they say, to paint their bull’s-eyes right on terrorist assholes. These crews are the sharp end of the most effective death-and-destruction delivery system ever devised.

The air campaign that was waged over Afghanistan is of a significantly higher order than the one conducted over Vietnam, where flying a fighter-bomber was still essentially a solo act. Today’s air assault is a feat of aerial coordination. From early October of 2001 until the following January the sky over Afghanistan caterwauled with warplanes and support aircraft from the British and American Army, Navy, Marines, and Air Force—so many that the greatest danger faced by crews like those of the Bold Tigers was colliding with one another or being clipped by JDAMs from above.

At the highest level, in orbit hundreds of miles up, were scores of satellites. Below them, at 40,000 feet or so, were the Buffs and B-1s, which dropped more than half the bombs used on Afghanistan. There were EA-6 Prowlers to jam enemy communications. There were A-10 Thunderbolts and AC-130s for close air support, and air-rescue teams in helicopters—Pave Lows (MH-53Js), Black Hawks (UH-60s), and Jolly Green Giants (HH-53s). Finally, there were the strikers—the F-15s, the F-16s, and the Navy and Marine Corps F-18 Hornets and F-14 Tomcats, which delivered laser-guided precision bombs. There were also the unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), armed with cameras and missiles—drones like the Predator (RQ-1), which made a name for itself for the first time in this conflict. Add to these dozens of Extenders (KC-10s) and Stratotankers (KC-135s)—flying gas stations that enabled the armada to stay aloft for hours and hours. And last there were Boss Man and its British equivalent, Spartan, whose job it was to coordinate the whole Kabul-ki Dance.

Over Afghanistan the twelve Strike Eagles of the 391st usually carried nine GBU-style bombs, including, on five occasions, the GBU-28, a 5,000-pound bunker buster. The Bold Tigers were the busiest of three Air Force fighter squadrons in the war; they flew 230 sorties from October 17 to January 6. The squadron’s eighteen crews (thirty-five men and one woman, a twenty-six-year-old wizzo nicknamed Baldie, who had a full head of medium-brown hair), backed up by about 230 maintenance workers and munitions experts, delivered a goodly portion of the precision bombs dropped in the war. This small group of fliers played a major role in dismantling a totalitarian theocracy and chasing al Qaeda back into the hills.

The F-15 is an old aircraft, older than many of the crew members who fly it. Originally designed as a single-seat air-to-air fighter, it made its debut flight in 1972. It was the first operational jet with enough thrust to actually accelerate in a vertical climb. Sixty-four feet long and forty-three feet wide from wingtip to wingtip, it is slightly larger than a deluxe tour bus and considerably less accommodating for its crew. Adding a seat behind the pilot’s became useful for bombing missions, because the additional systems required for finding and hitting targets were too much for a single flier to handle. Apart

from all of its electronic wizardry, the twin-tailed jet consists of little more than fuel tanks and two huge Pratt & Whitney jet engines. The cockpit is tight. Instruments fill the displays in front of both pilot and wizzo and line panels to the left and the right. There is enough room for the fliers to stretch their legs forward, but not enough to raise their arms far over their heads, and little room to shift from side to side. Fearing deep-vein thrombosis on such long flights, doctors teach the crews isometric exercises to perform in the cramped space. The seats, which are attached to ejection rockets in case of emergency, have no cushioning, because any space for it would allow the hard shell of the chair to hit a flier's backside on ejection with enough impact to crush a pelvis or snap a spine. With an average sortie length for the squadron of about ten hours, the crews put up with sore rumps.

And insistent bladders. That issue did present itself, especially on the longer flights (the record was fifteen and a half hours). Urination was a struggle even for the men, who are provided with "piddle packs"—tubelike plastic bags with a powder inside that turns urine into a gel. In theory, piddle packs are easy to use, fitting right over the tip of the penis; but the crews are wearing flight suits, heavy jackets (the air temperature is sub-freezing at altitude), G-suits, and survival vests (with loaded 9-mm pistols), and are strapped down in spaces no larger than the back seat of a Honda Civic. More than one crew member had to strip down midflight and bring his skivvies home in a plastic bag.

It is even worse for women. The Air Force has been working on the concept of a woman's urinating in a cockpit for several years now, and if Baldie is a fair judge, it has not yet solved the problem. Poor Baldie. (Her nickname comes from the fact that she is married to an F-16 pilot and thus "bangs a Lawn Dart driver": BALD-D.) Sitting just a few feet in front of or behind a male flier, a woman is forced to disrobe in an immodest series of contortions, exposing her hands and hindquarters to the stinging cold, and then has to negotiate a funnel attached to a bag. It's little wonder that Baldie became known as the "super camel," for her holding ability. ("I did sprint to the bathroom a few times the second we landed," she says.) Bowel movements? Too horrible to contemplate, and no accommodations whatsoever. The bowels are easier to regulate, of course, and during the Afghanistan campaign Imodium became a staple of the Bold Tiger diet; but dining on not always familiar food in a foreign land has been known to create digestive emergencies that can confound even the strongest over-the-counter medications. One flier earned the nickname "B-nok," for "buck naked over Kuwait," when seized by a call that had to be answered. He relieved himself into a small cardboard fast-food container with the jet on autopilot. Most of these fliers can strip, crap, and fly all at once—a proud accomplishment. These are not the kinds of skills they package in the "Go Air Force" pitch.

The crews gladly accept their discomfort. Baldie announced her career intentions at age four. They were reinforced two years later, when her father was doing some contract work for NASA in Providence, Rhode Island, and one day brought home a collection of colorful prints of jet aircraft. He gave them to his daughter, who, thrilled, declared that in the future she was going to fly one. (She has recently started pilot training.) Slokes, a big, boisterous, confident man with short-clipped blond hair, is the son of a World War II fighter pilot, but he swears that this had nothing to do with his desire to be a flier. He attended the Air Force Academy because he got in, and because it was free. He aimed to be one of the twenty grads each year whom the academy sends on to medical school, and he had a GPA to qualify, but along the way he got a chance to fly. The stethoscope could not compete with the throttle. Snitch wanted to go to flight school when he graduated from the academy, but imperfect eyesight initially eliminated him from both the front and back seats. Undaunted, he applied for a waiver and



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The Bold Tigers are hunters. They prowl around in shoulder-held-missile territory, skimming the terrain. These crews are the sharp end of the most effective death-and-destruction delivery system ever devised.

started his job in Alaska as a criminal investigator for the Air Force. When the waiver was approved, he was torn. He liked his work, but in the Air Force the most prestigious job is in a bubble cockpit. His commanding officer, noticing how avidly Snitch watched the fighters take off and land every day, asked, "So, Lieutenant, what was it that brought you here in the first place?"

"I was waiting for my waiver to come through," he said.

"And ...?"

Super Dave, a balding, fair-haired wizzo of thirty-four, was raised on a dairy farm in Virginia. His goal had been to design airplanes, until a friend took him up in a Cessna: he was hooked. Push, a tall, lean Army brat with dark hair and blue eyes, accepted an Air Force ROTC scholarship as a means of paying his way through Duke University. It was not long before flying in an F-15 eclipsed his enthusiasm for civil engineering. Two Fish, who flew with Baldie, wants to be an astronaut. An Air Force Academy grad with a master's degree in astro-dynamics, he is aiming to keep alive a family tradition—his grandfather worked for NASA. Tank is on the same path. Growing up in Minnesota, he used to cut the lawn of a pilot who took him up in a plane a couple of times. He earned his pilot's license as a teenager, attended the academy, and is working on getting a graduate degree in aerospace engineering from the University of Washington.

Their commander, AJ, a trim man with a pink complexion who seems uncomfortable when not in motion, is an older version of them all. In his forties, AJ is the kind of man who could long ago have moved on to more-lucrative employment as a commercial pilot but who has never been able to shake the thrill of flying fighters. An Air Force brat whose father was a wizzo on missions over Korea and Vietnam, he has moved around so much in his life that he's not sure where he comes from. ("I think I'm from Idaho," he says.) AJ has an unabashed sense of commitment to his country.

Despite the high level of talent and motivation, flight crews are, by virtue of being flesh and blood, one of the weak links in the war machine. The Air Force tries to regulate them like delicate instruments, with pills to clog their bowels and pills to clean their bowels, "go" pills to speed crews up and "no go" pills to slow them down. The crews are pampered, not out of kindness but out of necessity. The job demands a great deal of mental and emotional clarity. So the base at al Jaber is by no means a hardship post. Crew members share air-conditioned mobile homes with a bathroom and a shower, cable TV, a DVD player, and PlayStation 2. They have hearty food, workout facilities, and an officers' club with a paperback library, twenty La-Z-Boy recliners, a big screen for movie viewing, a popcorn machine, and snacks (but no alcohol). The cable TV carries all the major networks and European MTV, and—perhaps owing to the generosity of the installer—receives unsolicited X-rated fare late at night. AJ got to see more of his beloved Green Bay Packers' games that fall than he ever gets to see at home in Idaho.

The crew members were entitled to one fifteen-minute satellite phone call home each week, and unlimited Internet access, resulting in constant e-mail traffic with spouses, family, and friends. Some of the fliers got in trouble for revealing too much in their excited stories. They quickly learned that the recipients were forwarding their private electronic messages to other friends, who forwarded them again, until the crews were getting return mail from perfect strangers all over the world. Each crew usually had a sortie to Afghanistan only every three or four days, and although they also flew missions over the no-fly zone in Iraq, there was still plenty of downtime. When she wasn't dropping bombs, Baldie, ever the multi-tasker, spent much of her time completing course work for a master's degree in engineering from Oklahoma State University. (Her professors FedExed her videotapes of their classes.) Some of the fliers

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Vision of Katherine Ellis, U.S. Trust Portfolio Manager

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Flight crews are, by virtue of being flesh and blood, one of the weak links in the war machine. The Air Force tries to regulate them like delicate instruments, with pills to clog their bowels and pills to clean their bowels, “go” pills to speed them up and “no go” pills to slow them down.

drove into Kuwait City on occasion to dine out at restaurants or shop at the Western-style malls. AJ and some others even attended an air show in Dubai, the third largest in the world. War was never like this before.

Chaz, a lieutenant colonel who served as the Bold Tigers’ ops officer, had the job of keeping the squadron flying, which involved artfully managing rest and maintenance. A longtime wizzo from Mississippi, blond and stocky at age forty-three, he would review charts, ask questions, listen intently, and, above all, peer deeply into the eyes of the young crew members while trying to decide if they were rested and alert enough to fly. They all wanted to fly as often as they were allowed, but Chaz made up his own mind about it. He was less interested in what they said than in the look in their eyes. If he didn’t like what he saw there, if he saw jumpiness or flatness, they were grounded.

With all the direct hits recorded by the Bold Tigers in the campaign, Chaz is proudest of a shot that missed. “One of my young wizzos got disoriented while his bomb was in flight,” he says, smiling beatifically. “He directed it into a dirt field. That’s good judgment, good training.”

For the Bold Tigers flying over Afghanistan, the most excitement came at the beginning of the campaign. The squadron flew its first sortie of the war on October 17. After leaving Kuwait, two F-15s felt their way into unfamiliar space out over the Persian Gulf on a perfectly black night, their initial objective to find an Extender, because they couldn’t make the long flight without repeated refueling.

AJ flew alongside an F-15 piloted by Slokes. Each jet carried nine 500-pound bombs. It was just over a month after the attacks on the United States, and both crews felt a strong sense of purpose heading off to war. There was a powerful urge to act. Wearing night optical goggles, known as NOGs, they occasionally saw the green outlines of a carrier force in the smooth black waters below. But for Air Force planes carriers were not an option for refueling; they needed to find an airborne tanker. Fuel management was critical, and on that first flight AJ was nervous. “Whenever a pilot tells me he gets bored on a long flight,” he says, “I tell him he should learn to worry more.” They had to maintain enough fuel to fly to a friendly base in an emergency, which meant they had to keep topping off their fuel tanks in the air. AJ, working with an AWACS, was finally able to spot an Extender before the sortie would have needed to be aborted. They took no chances after finding the big tanker. They just slowed down and flew alongside it over Pakistan and into southern Afghanistan.

In the early days of the war the Bold Tigers tended to rendezvous over Kandahar, near the Pakistani border in the southeastern corner of the country, where they would wait for a fragged target. At that point they faced plenty of anti-aircraft artillery, or “triple A.” The shots would come in bursts of three to five. The Zeus (ZSU-23) snaked up, a twisting line of orange light. KS-19s, which fire 100-mm shells, were more worrisome; sometimes when the jets were under 20,000 feet, a shell would burst in a sudden white flash above them. That got the attention of the crew, like someone flipping on a floodlight in the darkness. The 57-mm guns sent up red tracers that usually fizzled well below the jets. But the smaller rounds came up faster. The shells rose as brightening balls of light. The crews worried when they saw out their canopy a ball centered on their plane rather than sliding away; that meant it was bearing straight at them. At 20,000 to 30,000 feet they were pretty much out of range, but in a country with 12,000-foot mountain peaks even that altitude wasn’t completely safe. It was always a comfort to be flying at night. Flying that high, they could be spotted only as a faint moving shadow on the stars.

On that first sortie they were given a target in Jalalabad, a two-building radio

relay station inside a walled compound. Snitch had already typed the ground coordinates from Boss Man into his computer, and once over the area he pointed his target pod in the general direction. He then began to search his video screen for the radio relay station, trying to pick up visual clues from the surrounding neighborhood based on the description he had been given. Some descriptions were better than others. When he had the ground coordinates before beginning the mission, he would draw himself a map that made it easier to locate the target. This time he hadn't made a sketch, because from his pre-flight target study it looked like what Slokes had called "a dog-balls target," meaning it stood out conspicuously.

When they flew into the air over Jalalabad, their jet noise alerted ground defenses, and the sky erupted around them with triple A. They heard no sound, just saw lines of light and sudden flashes of white, yellow, and red around and above them. AJ and his wizzo hit their target on the first pass, but Slokes and Snitch had trouble pinpointing theirs. In daylight the target may have stood out like dog balls, but they had arrived at a time of night known as "thermal crossover"—that is, the point when ground temperatures had dropped enough to match the temperature of the buildings. Because the imaging equipment in the target pod was thermal, Snitch had a hell of a time making the target out. Three times Slokes swung the jet around and flew back into the light show, as Snitch tried to zero in on the building.

"Come on, dude, we need to get these bombs off," Slokes urged.

Snitch knew from the first two passes that the building would become more visible the closer they got. The GBU was equipped with a laser sensor in its tip, and with small steering mechanisms in its fins, called servo motors, to redirect its flight. So he could release the bombs before the building was completely visible and then steer them in as the picture came into better focus. He approximated the target and told Slokes, "Captured, cleared to pickle."

Slokes pushed the button, and the first bomb dropped. Snitch then placed the cursor on his screen at the precise spot he wanted it to hit—"painting the target," the fliers called it—and fired his laser. The wizzo guided the bomb directly into the second building.

Both crews, first elated, grew sober. They had spent years practicing, so bombing was routine, even sport. Now they were dropping real 500-pound bombs on real people. Packed with high explosives, encased in hard metal designed to fracture into hot shrapnel, a GBU-12 would vaporize anyone or anything within a few yards of its detonation, which would be seen as a black splash on Snitch's screen. No one inside a radius of about 200 meters would be likely to survive the shock wave and shrapnel. A safe distance (behind cover) was considered to be 500 meters—a meter for every pound of explosives. No matter how accurate the crews were, they could only hope that they were hitting appropriate targets; they were only as good as their intel. They all tried to imagine what it would be like to be on the receiving end of their delivery. An American pilot captive in Baghdad during the Persian Gulf War, who survived a GBU-12 hit on the prison where he was being held, said the approaching bomb made a sound like tearing canvas. (Older bombs, less aerodynamic, whistled.) Then came the *click! click! click!* of the servo motors as the bomb was steered home, followed by the loud static noise of the laser ionizing the air around it. Then *WHAM!*

The adrenaline rush faded on the long flight home. The pilots and wizzos talked, popped go pills as necessary, and checked and rechecked their navigation. Sometimes they broke out peanut butter and jelly sandwiches or croissants they'd provisioned from the mess hall. Mach One can feel like a crawl in the final hours of a nine-hour sortie.



It was hard in the beginning to tell if they were making a difference. One of the first sorties that seemed to strike a blow came about a week into the campaign, when two Bold Tiger Strike Eagles took out the Ministry for the Prevention of Vice and Propagation of Virtue in Kandahar, which intel later assured them was a big deal. "We want you to hit a building," Boss Man said. When Super Dave plotted out the coordinates, he saw that it was in the center of Kandahar.

"Oh, boy, this is going to be good," he told his pilot, Curly. The targeting directions were somewhat vague. Super Dave was told to look at his screen for a big intersection, and to aim for the large building on the northeast corner. He was trying to memorize Kandahar (that's how he spent the long hours on the flight over), and one thing he knew for sure was that the city had lots of intersections. He told the controller that he needed better information.

"The building has columns," the controller said.

There was no way, looking straight down, that they were going to see columns. So Super Dave and Fang, the wizzo in the other F-15, went to work on the problem. Comparing the global-positioning coordinates with the infrared image on his screen, they asked for clarification from Boss Man, and finally zeroed in on a building that was several city blocks long. Super Dave's first bomb hit the domed front corner of the structure. The two jets took their time, making runs just as they did in target practice. On the video of the sortie the targeted end of the building collapses neatly, folding in on itself, more like the object of a professional demolition than the victim of an improvised bombing run.

In those early days of the campaign there were more targets than time to hit them, and sometimes the crews found themselves being pushed to do more than they thought wise. The crews classified missions by priority: low (could be put off until another day), medium (time-sensitive), or high (urgent because U.S. forces were under fire on the ground). In high-priority circumstances the crews were willing to take bigger risks, including flying off to remote areas without knowing whether they would be able to find a tanker to refuel, and flying low over lofty mountain ranges where they knew they would be vulnerable to shoulder-fired SAMs.

For low- and medium-priority missions they learned to dicker with the AWACS. Push was the wizzo on an early sortie when Spartan, the British AWACS, assigned his and another F-15, flying wing, a target in Tarin Kowt, a city north of Kandahar. It was described as a Taliban headquarters building, housing government leaders. The jets had been in the air for hours, earlier in northern Afghanistan, and were low on fuel. They knew that the target area was fairly distant and that tankers were unlikely to be in the vicinity. They didn't relish the prospect of having to make an emergency landing somewhere in northern Pakistan, which is what Spartan recommended. So they bargained. If Spartan would assign them two tankers, they'd do the job. Push remembers wondering whether this was the right thing to do. The crews discussed it among themselves and concluded that if the target was of high enough priority to put them in this situation, it was worth a couple of tankers. They sweated it out for a few minutes until Spartan coughed up the tankers, and then they flew north.

In the end they destroyed their target, but it was a stressful ride home. When they landed at al Jaber, concluding a thirteen-hour sortie, their group commander was waiting for them on the tarmac. That had not happened before. It signified something either very good or very bad. Maybe the brass were displeased with their dickering.

But when the men climbed down from their cockpits, it was to handshakes and praise.

The war gave the crews opportunities to stretch their skills, to try things they





In over 10 years of taking this medication, ZOCOR, I've been taking ZOCOR ever since I had bypass surgery about 4 years ago. My doctor told me that along with a healthy diet and exercise, ZOCOR could lower my cholesterol, which is what I really needed to do. I've always felt good knowing ZOCOR is a time-tested medication. You should too. And my cholesterol? ZOCOR really got it down.

ZOCOR is an HMG-CoA reductase inhibitor. A clinical study among people with high cholesterol and heart disease found 42% fewer deaths from heart attack among those taking ZOCOR.* One tablet, taken once a day, can help people with high cholesterol and heart disease live a longer, healthier life.

Important information: ZOCOR is a prescription medicine and isn't right for everyone, including women who are nursing or pregnant or who may become pregnant, anyone with liver problems, and people who are allergic to any ingredients of ZOCOR. Unexplained muscle pain or weakness could be a sign of a rare but serious side effect and should be reported to your doctor right away. Your doctor may do blood tests before and during treatment with ZOCOR to check for liver problems. To avoid serious side effects, discuss with your doctor medicine or food you should avoid while on ZOCOR (see details immediately following this ad).

When diet and exercise aren't enough, ZOCOR may help. For more information and the free *Guide for Patients*, visit www.zocor.com or call 1-800-MERCK-75.

YOUR RESULTS MAY VARY.

PLEASE READ THE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT ZOCOR IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THIS AD.

*42% reduction based on 111/2,221 (ZOCOR) vs 189/2,223 (placebo).

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PLEASE READ THIS SUMMARY CAREFULLY, AND THEN ASK YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT ZOCOR. NO ADVERTISEMENT CAN PROVIDE ALL THE INFORMATION NEEDED TO PRESCRIBE A DRUG. THIS ADVERTISEMENT DOES NOT TAKE THE PLACE OF CAREFUL DISCUSSIONS WITH YOUR DOCTOR. ONLY YOUR DOCTOR HAS THE TRAINING TO WEIGH THE RISKS AND BENEFITS OF A PRESCRIPTION DRUG FOR YOU.

USES OF ZOCOR

ZOCOR is a prescription drug that is indicated as an addition to diet for many patients with high cholesterol when diet and exercise are inadequate. For patients with coronary heart disease (CHD) and high cholesterol, ZOCOR is indicated as an addition to diet to reduce the risk of death by reducing coronary death; to reduce the risk of heart attack; to reduce the risk for undergoing cardiac procedures (coronary artery bypass grafting and percutaneous transluminal coronary angioplasty); and to reduce the risk of stroke or transient ischemic attack (TIA).

WHEN ZOCOR SHOULD NOT BE USED

Some people should not take ZOCOR. Discuss this with your doctor.

ZOCOR should not be used by patients who are allergic to any of its ingredients. In addition to the active ingredient simvastatin, each tablet contains the following inactive ingredients: cellulose, lactose, magnesium stearate, iron oxides, talc, titanium dioxide, and starch. Butylated hydroxyanisole is added as a preservative.

Patients with liver problems: ZOCOR should not be used by patients with active liver disease or repeated blood test results indicating possible liver problems. (See WARNINGS.)

Women who are or may become pregnant: Pregnant women should not take ZOCOR because it may harm the fetus. **Women of childbearing age should not take ZOCOR unless it is highly unlikely that they will become pregnant.** If a woman does become pregnant while on ZOCOR, she should stop taking the drug and talk to her doctor at once.

Women who are breast-feeding should not take ZOCOR.

WARNINGS

Muscle: Tell your doctor right away if you experience any unexplained muscle pain, tenderness, or weakness at any time during treatment with ZOCOR so your doctor can decide if ZOCOR should be stopped. **Some patients may have muscle pain or weakness while taking ZOCOR.** Rarely, this can include muscle breakdown resulting in kidney damage. The risk of muscle breakdown is greater in patients taking certain other drugs along with ZOCOR:

- Cyclosporine, itraconazole, ketoconazole, erythromycin, clarithromycin, HIV protease inhibitors, the antidepressant nefazodone, or large quantities of grapefruit juice (>1 quart daily), particularly with higher doses of ZOCOR.
- Gemfibrozil, other fibrates, or lipid-lowering doses (≥ 1 g/day) of niacin, particularly with higher doses of ZOCOR.
- Amiodarone or verapamil with higher doses of ZOCOR.

The risk of muscle breakdown is greater at higher doses of simvastatin.

Because the risk of muscle side effects is greater when ZOCOR is used with the products listed above, the combined use of these products should be avoided unless your doctor determines the benefits are likely to outweigh the increased risks.

If your doctor determines that the benefits of combined use of ZOCOR with gemfibrozil, other fibrates, or niacin likely outweigh the increased risk of muscle problems, the dose of ZOCOR should not exceed 10 mg daily. No more than 10 mg/day of ZOCOR should be taken with cyclosporine.

The combined use of verapamil or amiodarone with doses above ZOCOR 20 mg should be avoided unless your doctor determines the benefits outweigh the increased risk of muscle breakdown.

Your doctor should also carefully monitor for any muscle pain, tenderness, or weakness, particularly during the initial months of therapy and if the dose of either drug is increased. Your doctor also may monitor the level of certain muscle enzymes in your body, but there is no assurance that such monitoring will prevent the occurrence of severe muscle disease.

The risk of muscle breakdown is greater in patients with kidney problems or diabetes.

If you have conditions that can increase your risk of muscle breakdown, which in turn can cause kidney damage, your doctor should temporarily withhold or stop ZOCOR. Also, since there are no known adverse consequences of briefly stopping therapy with ZOCOR, treatment should be stopped a few days before elective major surgery and when any major acute medical or surgical condition occurs. Discuss this with your doctor, who can explain these conditions to you.

Liver: About 1% of patients who took ZOCOR in clinical trials developed elevated levels of some liver enzymes. Patients who had these increases usually had no symptoms. Elevated liver enzymes usually returned to normal levels when therapy with ZOCOR was stopped.

In the ZOCOR Survival Study, the number of patients with more than 1 liver enzyme level elevation to greater than 3 times the normal upper limit was no different between the ZOCOR and placebo groups. Only 8 patients on ZOCOR and 5 on placebo discontinued therapy due to elevated liver enzyme levels. Patients were started on 20 mg of ZOCOR, and one third had their dose raised to 40 mg.

Your doctor should perform routine blood tests to check these enzymes before you start treatment with ZOCOR and periodically thereafter (for example, semiannually) for your first year of treatment or until 1 year after your last elevation in dose. Patients titrated to the 80-mg dose should receive an additional test at 3 months. If your enzyme levels increase, your doctor should order more frequent tests. If your liver enzyme levels remain unusually high, your doctor should discontinue your medication.

Tell your doctor about any liver disease you may have had in the past and about how much alcohol you consume. ZOCOR should be used with caution in patients who consume large amounts of alcohol.

PRECAUTIONS

Before starting treatment with ZOCOR, try to lower your cholesterol by other methods such as diet, exercise, and weight loss. Ask your doctor about how best to do this. Any other medical problems that can cause high cholesterol should also be treated.

Drug Interactions: Because of possible serious drug interactions, it is important to tell your doctor what other drugs you are taking, including those obtained without a prescription. You should also tell other doctors who are prescribing a new medicine for you that you are taking ZOCOR® (simvastatin).

ZOCOR can interact with the following:

- Itraconazole
- Ketoconazole
- Erythromycin
- Clarithromycin
- HIV protease inhibitors
- Nefazodone
- Cyclosporine
- Large quantities of grapefruit juice (>1 quart daily)

The risk of myopathy is also increased by the following lipid-lowering drugs that can cause myopathy when given alone:

- Gemfibrozil
- Other fibrates
- Niacin (nicotinic acid) (≥ 1 g/day)

The risk of muscle breakdown is increased with other drugs:

- Amiodarone
- Verapamil

Some patients taking lipid-lowering agents similar to ZOCOR and coumarin anticoagulants (a type of blood thinner) have experienced bleeding and/or increased blood clotting time. Patients taking these medicines should have their blood tested before starting therapy with ZOCOR and should continue to be monitored.

Central Nervous System Toxicity; Cancer, Mutations, Impairment of Fertility: Like most prescription drugs, ZOCOR was required to be tested on animals before it was marketed for human use. Often these tests were designed to achieve higher drug concentrations than humans achieve at recommended dosing. In some tests, the animals had damage to the nerves in the central nervous system. In studies of mice with high doses of ZOCOR, the likelihood of certain types of cancerous tumors increased. No evidence of mutations or of damage to genetic material has been seen. In 1 study with ZOCOR, there was decreased fertility in male rats.

Pregnancy: Pregnant women should not take ZOCOR because it may harm the fetus.

Safety in pregnancy has not been established. In studies with lipid-lowering agents similar to ZOCOR, there have been rare reports of birth defects of the skeleton and digestive system. Therefore, women of childbearing age should not take ZOCOR unless it is highly unlikely they will become pregnant. If a woman does become pregnant while taking ZOCOR, she should stop taking the drug and talk to her doctor at once. The active ingredient of ZOCOR did not cause birth defects in rats at 3 times the human dose or in rabbits at 3 times the human dose.

Nursing Mothers: Drugs taken by nursing mothers may be present in their breast milk. Because of the potential for serious adverse reactions in nursing infants, a woman taking ZOCOR should not breast-feed. (See WHEN ZOCOR SHOULD NOT BE USED.)

Pediatric Use: ZOCOR is not recommended for children or patients under 20 years of age.

Geriatric Use: Higher blood levels of active drug were seen in elderly patients (70–78 years of age) compared with younger patients (18–30 years of age) in 1 study. In other studies, the cholesterol-lowering effects of ZOCOR were at least as great in elderly patients as in younger patients, and there were no overall differences in safety between elderly and younger patients over the 20–80 mg/day dosage range.

SIDE EFFECTS

Most patients tolerate treatment with ZOCOR well; however, like all prescription drugs, ZOCOR can cause side effects, and some of them can be serious. Side effects that do occur are usually mild and short-lived. Only your doctor can weigh the risks versus the benefits of any prescription drug. In clinical studies with ZOCOR, less than 1.5% of patients dropped out of the studies because of side effects. In a large, long-term study, patients taking ZOCOR experienced similar side effects to those patients taking placebo (sugar pills). Some of the side effects that have been reported with ZOCOR or related drugs are listed below. **This list is not complete. Be sure to ask your doctor about side effects before taking ZOCOR and to discuss any side effects that occur.**

Digestive System: Constipation, diarrhea, upset stomach, gas, heartburn, stomach pain/cramps, anorexia, loss of appetite, nausea, inflammation of the pancreas, hepatitis, jaundice, fatty changes in the liver, and, rarely, severe liver damage and failure, cirrhosis, and liver cancer.

Muscle, Skeletal: Muscle cramps, aches, pain, and weakness; joint pain; muscle breakdown.

Nervous System: Dizziness, headache, insomnia, tingling, memory loss, damage to nerves causing weakness and/or loss of sensation and/or abnormal sensations, anxiety, depression, tremor, loss of balance, psychotic disturbances.

Skin: Rash, itching, hair loss, dryness, nodules, discoloration.

Eye/Senses: Blurred vision, altered taste sensation, progression of cataracts, eye muscle weakness.

Hypersensitivity (Allergic) Reactions: On rare occasions, a wide variety of symptoms have been reported to occur either alone or together in groups (referred to as a syndrome) that appeared to be based on allergic-type reactions, which may rarely be fatal. These have included 1 or more of the following: a severe generalized reaction that may include shortness of breath, wheezing, digestive symptoms, and low blood pressure and even shock; an allergic reaction with swelling of the face, lips, tongue, and/or throat with difficulty swallowing or breathing; symptoms mimicking lupus (a disorder in which a person's immune system may attack parts of his or her own body); severe muscle and blood vessel inflammation, sometimes including rash; bruises; various disorders of blood cells (that could result in anemia, infection, or blood clotting problems) or abnormal blood tests; inflamed or painful joints; hives; fatigue and weakness; sensitivity to sunlight; fever, chills; flushing; difficulty breathing; and severe skin disorders that vary from rash to a serious burn-like shedding of skin all over the body, including mucous membranes such as the lining of the mouth.

Other: Loss of sexual desire, breast enlargement, impotence.

Laboratory Tests: Liver function test abnormalities including elevated alkaline phosphatase and bilirubin; thyroid function abnormalities.

NOTE: This summary provides important information about ZOCOR. If you would like more information, ask your doctor or pharmacist to let you read the prescribing information and then discuss it with them.



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had never attempted during practice. Two Fish and Baldie were midway through a sortie when an AWACS assigned them an important target, a convoy of trucks. Baldie estimated the speed of the vehicles to be 100 miles an hour. (“How fast would you be driving down the road if you knew that an F-15 was trying to kill you?” she asks.) She made a rough calculation of where the trucks would be when the bomb reached the road, and cleared Two Fish to pickle. Guiding the GBU with her laser, teasing it along with her hand controller, like a kite at the end of a string, she put it right through the lead truck’s front grille.

“You have just been killed by a girl,” Two Fish said.

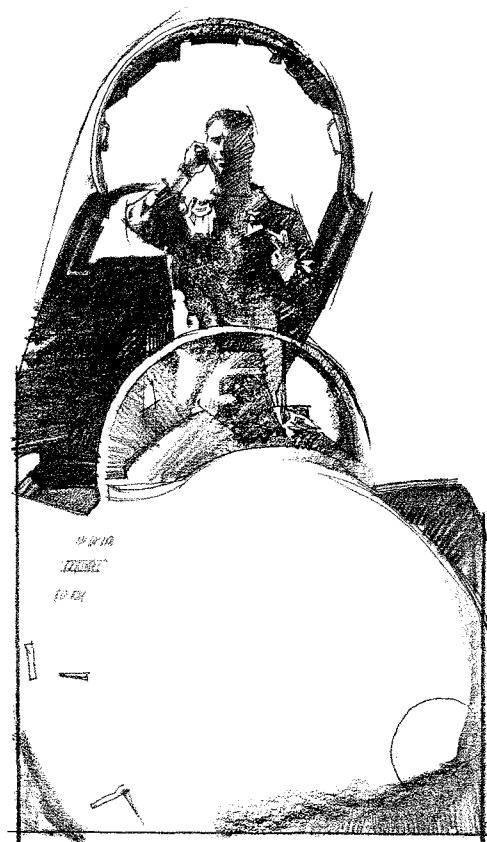
Few things are more satisfying in war than watching the enemy employ outmoded tactics. Snitch and Slokes, flying over Kabul one night, stared in wonder as all the city’s lights went out in a matter of seconds. An alarm had obviously sounded, and someone was throwing main switches at a power plant. The lights went out in four sectors—one, two, three, four. Just like that the entire city went black, which would have made perfect sense, say, twenty years ago, when technologically primitive Soviet MiGs were overhead. But turning off all the artificial light had the effect of reducing the “noise” in the fliers’ NOC reception. It gave them a clearer view below.

What was the human cost of all this state-of-the-art expertise? The Pentagon does not attempt to tally casualties among enemy combatants, but given how many bombs were dropped and targets destroyed, the numbers in Afghanistan had to be well into the thousands. As for innocent victims, there are likewise no good estimates. Casualty counts are effectively propaganda, so they are all suspect. Human-rights groups, many of which oppose war categorically, say thousands of innocents died. Marc W. Herold, a professor of economics at the University of New Hampshire, who has a decided antiwar bent, used primarily media accounts but also interviews with refugees to calculate that the two-month campaign produced at least 3,767 civilian casualties. But that number appears to be grandly inflated. A study by the Project on Defense Alternatives, a nonprofit academic defense-policy group, using fewer data but more-stringent categories than Herold did, estimated 1,000 to 1,300 civilian deaths, and a *New York Times* investigation last summer put the total closer to 400.

No bombing campaign—no matter how sophisticated or scrupulous—can completely avoid mistakes, whether from errant bombs or faulty intelligence. Given one target in a crowded urban neighborhood, Slokes warned Boss Man, “Make sure you got this one on tape.” He did not want to be held responsible for the consequences. They all knew that mistakes could take the lives of kids sleeping in the wrong houses, people crossing the wrong streets. Some of the Bold Tigers wrestled with this grim knowledge. Baldie, who flew five bombing missions and describes herself as “a Catholic who goes to church every Sunday,” sometimes found the consequences of her work “hard to think about.” After viewing sortie videos she would brood over the fact that the job she had done that day had killed some people and ruined others’ lives. The first bomb she dropped in Afghanistan missed. She had aimed at a tank but made a big crater in the side of a nearby mountain instead. She knew that a miss like that over a city or a town could have terrible consequences.

By any account (including Herold’s), the bombing campaign in Afghanistan hit fewer unintended targets than any other in history. Pentagon analysts say that more than 75 percent of the bombs dropped in Afghanistan exploded where targeted, compared with fewer than half in the Persian Gulf War, in 1991, and in the much touted bombings over Serbia in 1999.

For the Bold Tigers the deaths of innocents were part of the price of war. As long as they believed that the war was necessary and was improving the lives of



The extraordinarily brave forward air controllers, or FACs, found themselves deep in enemy territory, calling down air strikes and orchestrating what quickly became victory. They hunkered down in dangerous places to become the forwardmost eyes and ears of the air assault.

millions oppressed by the Taliban, that cost was acceptable. Baldie recalls an interview with a Taliban official that aired on CNN. He was asked by a reporter how his regime could use an Olympic soccer stadium to hold public executions, in which men were hanged from goalposts and women were shot at the goal lines for offenses such as adultery. The mullah mistook the moral question for a practical one. He protested that if only international money were available to build a separate stadium for executions, then soccer matches might be able to resume in the current one. Baldie was so appalled that she later found those remarks comforting when she steered home her bombs.

Among the squadron's recorded collection of audio-video "greatest hits" was the artful destruction of a purported Taliban building in Kandahar. Last summer I reviewed the event with a group of crew members at their base in Idaho. On the monitor we watched a negative black-and-white thermal image of a building at the center of the city. Vehicles and people were moving on the street out front. Abruptly four black darts flashed into the picture from the upper left-hand side, quick as an eye blink, and the screen was filled with a black splash.

On the recording the gleeful voice of a wizzo named Buzzer shouted, "*Shack, baby! Die like the dogs that you are!*"

We all sat in silence for a moment as the outburst hung awkwardly in the air. Buzzer is known for raw commentary like this, and months removed from the heat of battle, with a writer there and all, the six crew members in the room were clearly having second thoughts about having played this particular clip. On the screen, in the form of tiny black dots, people could be seen emerging from the flaming building, fleeing down the street.

Finally, Slokes spoke. His face creased with disapproval, he said sternly, "That's just wrong." He held his expression for a few seconds, and no one in the room was sure about whether to take him seriously. Then he grinned. Everyone laughed.

In the early weeks of the campaign the American effort to topple the Taliban and rout al Qaeda was not showing big results. By late October there were signs that the campaign was getting bogged down. With winter approaching, skeptics predicted that experienced Taliban and al Qaeda fighters might hang tough for years, as they had two decades earlier against the Soviet Union. According to *The New York Times*, Ahmed Rashid, one of the foremost authorities on the Taliban, was predicting that the Taliban leaders and their fighters could survive for "at least six months." R. W. Apple, the veteran *Times* news analyst, invoked the historically loaded term "quagmire."

On November 13 Kabul fell. Three weeks after that the Taliban fled Kandahar, their final stronghold, and jubilant citizens danced in the streets, tearing down Taliban flags and raising the traditional black, red, and green Afghan banner. The heart of the American military campaign had taken exactly two months.

The turning point, as experienced from the cockpit of an F-15, was the introduction on the ground of small numbers of U.S. soldiers—Rangers, Delta Force, and the Air Force's own combat controllers—known as forward air controllers, or FACs, whose voices started crackling into the fliers' headsets in late October. These extraordinarily brave stealth operators found themselves alone or in small groups deep in enemy territory, calling down air strikes and orchestrating what quickly became victory. They had parachuted or been helicoptered into Afghanistan at night, and had been left on the ground to fend for themselves. Some Special Forces teams, Green Berets, went to work helping to mobilize friendly Afghan forces against the Taliban and al Qaeda. Others usually hunkered down in dangerous places—the vicinity of airports, forts, and enemy troop concentrations, for example—to become the forwardmost eyes and ears of the air assault.

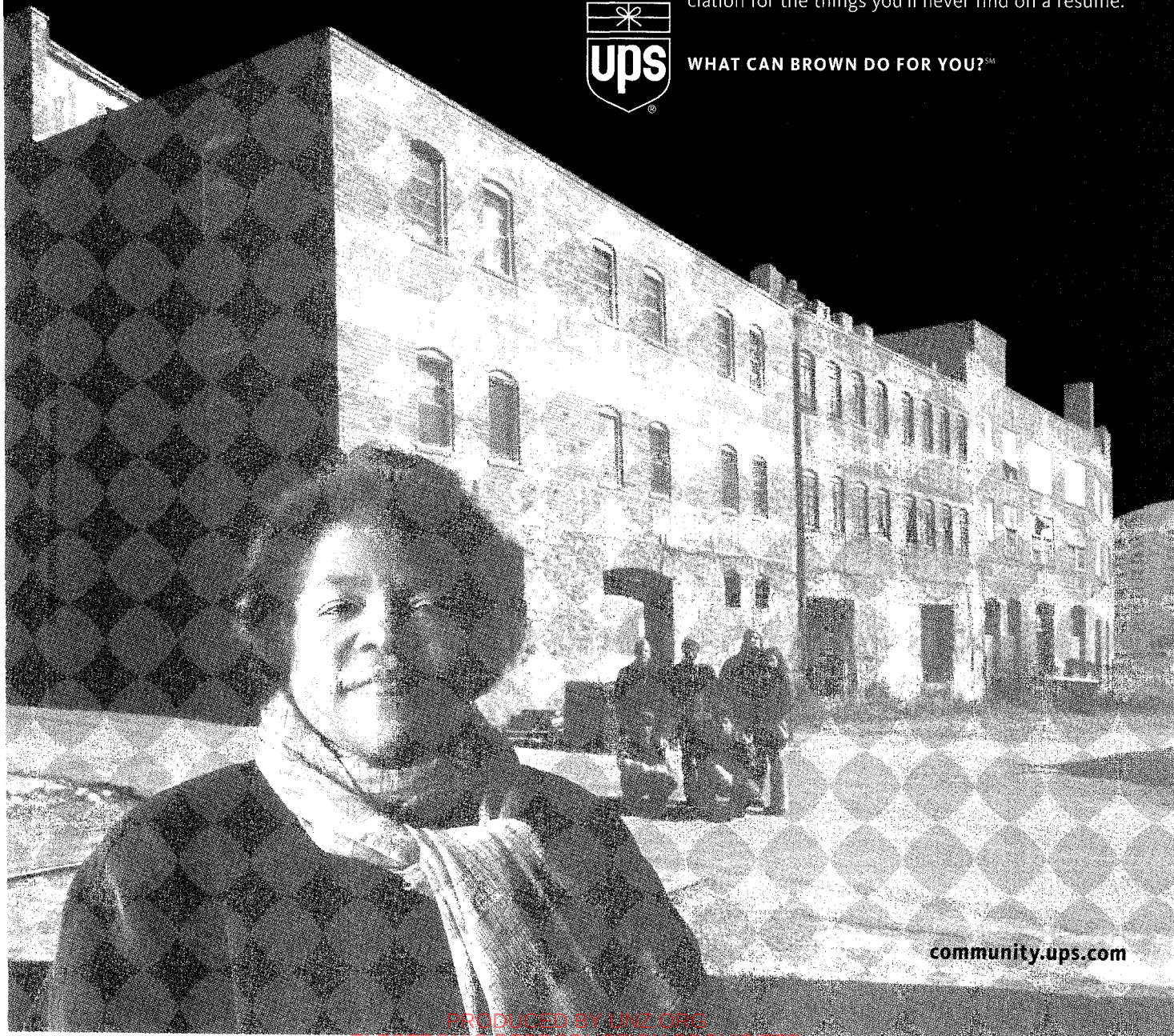
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Tank was flying wing on October 25 on a four-plane mission from Kandahar up to Mazar-i-Sharif. He listened in on the communications as a team of F-16s dove into their bombing runs. To Tank's delight, the jets were talking to a ground FAC. When the Lawn Darts had shot their load, the F-15s moved in and started working with the operative. The landscape below was all enemy-controlled territory, but somewhere in the stark hills was this American voice and a keen pair of eyes. The ground FAC was trying to coordinate an attack on a collection of enemy tanks and trucks. This flight was code-named Zesty (like many F-15 sorties).

"Can you ID a vehicle, Zesty?" the ground FAC asked.

"We're at twenty-five thousand feet," answered Stab, one of the pilots, meaning, "Not likely."

"Do you see the main road?" the ground FAC asked.

"Roger."

"Any vehicle north of that road is bad. The good guys are all on horses and camels."

Slokes and Snitch were in awe of the guys on the ground, who were so far from anything friendly, huddled down between rocks on cold mountainsides, eating their packaged meals (or bugs and snakes), and sleeping in bags on hard terrain, while the Bold Tigers dined on steak and lobster, watched European MTV, and slept in air-conditioned comfort. It made the pilots doubly disappointed when they were unable to hit what the ground FACs wanted them to.

One night Slokes and Snitch were assigned to a Special Forces team perched temporarily on a hillside just south of Kandahar, not far from the city's airport. Four miles above, at 20,000 feet, the fliers watched as the ground FAC waved an infrared laser pointer to draw them a map on the hillside. He traced a waving line, and gradually narrowed its swing down to a point. "We're here," one Special Forces operative told them.

He was part of a team of eight men, code-named Texas One Seven, with whom the Bold Tigers would work for weeks. Using the steep hillside to provide protective cover from the north, the eight had set up camp in a valley, complete with a big plastic bag of fuel, called a bladder, to serve as a filling station for their four-wheeled vehicles.

There was one ground controller working near Kabul whom the crews dubbed the Crack FAC, because his ground-to-air instructions were so vague and at times so misleading that he seemed to be on crack. Not that they didn't respect the guy. He must have been, as they put it, "crazy brave" to be down where he was. But whenever Boss Man ordered a crew to work with the guy, there were groans in the cockpit. The Crack FAC didn't sound any older than nineteen. (The squadron never found out who he was.)

"Okay, you see the first ridgeline?" he said on one run. "Go one ridge over." From the cockpit at 20,000 feet, the world was made up of ridgelines. "You're going to have to be more specific than that," the pilot told him.

On one occasion he pleaded with a crew to drop on a village. "Just go ahead and drop a bomb," he said.

"We can't do that, dude," a pilot nicknamed Bait replied, meaning they couldn't just wipe out an entire village.

"There haven't been any good guys in that village for years," the Crack FAC argued.

"I might hit you," Bait said.

"You're not going to hit me, man, I'm standing in snow."

Still, the crews declined to drop their bombs.

But even the Crack FAC got better at communicating, and the crews grew fonder of him. After directing a strike on a Taliban tank that had begun firing on his position, a relieved Crack FAC called back, "Zesty, that was *excellent*!"

On the last day of October, just before the course of the air war started to turn dramatically, a Strike Eagle flown by Zuni with a wizzo named Gunner, veterans both, got a call from Spartan, directing it north to help some U.S. forces under fire. With a full load of GBU-12s and fuel, the jet was what the crews call a “pig in space,” and flew at what seemed to them a snail’s pace. Once in the vicinity, they started calling for Tiger Three, the ground FAC. When his voice came up into the headphones, it was clear they were dealing with a cool customer.

“Hey, Zesty, I’m ready to give a nine-line brief,” he said—jargon for a quick assessment of the situation. He wanted them to get right to work. What he needed wasn’t going to be easy. This was a daylight sortie, but cloud cover had been building. Now the crew could see nothing below but an ocean of cotton. Here and there mountain peaks poked through. Zuni wanted to know exactly how urgent the situation was.

“Tiger Three, this is Zesty. Are you under fire?”

“Roger, Zesty. We are under fire by tank.”

That was about as urgent as things could get. The two fliers were going to have to try something. Zuni asked if the ground FAC had the capability of changing his laser code to steer the F-15’s bombs. He did, so it was theoretically possible to drop the bombs into the clouds and let him take over.

At first the fliers struggled to relay the numbers of their laser code through the static. Then Zuni asked the ground FAC to read him the latitude and longitude coordinates for the tanks. The ground FAC proceeded to read out a list of numbers, which Gunner quickly realized were calculated somewhat differently from what he was used to. For some inexplicable reason the Army uses a system different from the Air Force’s—one of those interservice snafus that have cropped up throughout the history of American warfare. The Air Force uses degrees, minutes, and thousandths of a minute, whereas the Army uses degrees, minutes, and seconds. All the numbers would have to be converted, and Gunner didn’t have a chart.

“I don’t have a nine-line card,” he complained. “I’ve got a fucking piece of paper.”

So at 20,000 feet, with friendly forces taking fire beneath an opaque canopy of clouds, flying a multimillion-dollar aircraft equipped with the U.S. military’s state-of-the-art targeting software, Gunner went to work with a pencil, a piece of paper, and the calculator on his Casio watch. He has a degree in aerospace engineering with a minor in physics, but this was going to call for long-dormant computational skills.

Gunner worked frantically. Under the pressure of the moment, hurtling forward at hundreds of miles per hour, he felt as if his brain were functioning at half speed as he pounded away on the tiny keys of his calculator. He was muttering to himself, “Ah, he gave me two-nine-point-six-nine. I made that four-five—shit! Four-five, three-seven, oh-six, five. And he gave me six-nine-two-two-point-four-one. I made that a point-seven ...”

The jet moved into heavy clouds and kept descending, hoping for clearer skies.

“Zesty, when do I turn on the laser?” the ground FAC asked.

“Wilco, stand by,” Zuni told the ground FAC. Then he said to his wizzo, “As soon as you get it in, Gunner, I’m going.”

“You’re good,” Gunner said with a sigh. He had just punched in the last conversion.

They now asked Tiger Three for an elevation reading, and once more the numbers had to be converted. Gunner started pounding away again on his watch.

“That’ll make it—ah, goddammit! That’ll make it sixteen hundred and six-nine feet for elevation.”

The jet was still socked in by clouds. In a land of high peaks it wasn’t safe to fly low with zero visibility for long.

“I don’t think I want to go underneath this, Cunner,” Zuni said.

“Nope,” the wizzo agreed. They would have to release the bomb blind.

What he needed wasn’t going to be easy. This was a daylight sortie, but cloud cover had been building. Now the crew could see nothing below but an ocean of cotton. Here and there mountain peaks poked through. Zuni wanted to know exactly how urgent the situation was.

**The science of war
will keep advancing.
A half century from
now the exploits of
the Bold Tigers over
Afghanistan will
be as anachronistic
as Saint-Exupéry's
battling biplanes.
Today's fighter jocks
will reminisce about
what it was actually
like to reign supreme
in the night sky.**

"Turn your laser on," Zuni instructed the ground FAC.

"Roger. Laser on."

"I want you to keep it on. Keep it on for at least about a minute and a half."

"Our laser will only allow sixty seconds," the ground FAC said.

"Okay, turn your laser *off*," Zuni instructed immediately, realizing that the battery would be dead by the time the ground FAC could pick up the bombs.

"Okay," Gunner said. "Five seconds."

"Turn your laser on *now*," Zuni told the ground FAC.

"Roger," came the voice from the ground. "Laser on."

"Weapon away," Zuni said. "Weapon away."

Zuni turned the jet and headed steeply up out of the clouds. Things got quiet. There was just the sound of the F-15 and the inhaling and exhaling of its anxious pilot and wizzo, waiting. Thirty seconds. Half the known age of the universe. At thirty seconds Zuni said hopefully, "You should have impact."

Nothing. More quiet breathing. Then, crackling in their headphones, "Zesty one-one. Laser off. Shack on target."

The pilot and the wizzo cheered in the cockpit.

"Prepare for immediate re-attack," Tiger Three said.

Making one run after another for the next twenty minutes, Zuni and Gunner repeated this procedure, doing the conversions, dropping the bombs blind, and waiting for the report back from the ground. Between runs the ground FAC changed the batteries in his laser.

Down under the clouds, unbeknownst to Zuni and Gunner, a miracle had taken place. When the squadron met with the ground FAC months later, he explained how things had looked from his end. He had been with a Northern Alliance unit equal in number to the Taliban forces but outgunned. With the Taliban fighters stretched in front of them in tanks, the Northern Alliance fighters were about to withdraw when the ground FAC persuaded them to wait for air support. This was early in the ground war, and the local fighters were still dubious of their new allies' technological claims. The Northern Alliance fighters eyed the opaque cloud cover skeptically. Who could hit anything through that? What could these scruffy American soldiers who showed up at their camps in teams of two or three accomplish in a real battle on unfamiliar terrain? What did they know about fighting? Many of the Northern Alliance soldiers were veterans of numerous campaigns. They didn't need Americans to tell them what they could or could not do on familiar battlefields. They knew when they were overmatched. Some of them were already falling back.

Then, like a thunderbolt, the first bomb blew up the lead Taliban tank. Minutes later another bomb shot through the clouds and destroyed a second tank. This happened again and again, until the imposing armored force arrayed before them was in smoking ruins. Mystified but jubilant, the Northern Alliance forces descended from the hills, routing the Taliban troops. It was a preview of what would happen in the coming weeks all over the country. How could one fight a foe that could rain pinpoint destruction through the clouds, day or night, 24/7?

When it was over, an exhausted Gunner complained to Zuni, "The recruiter said there would be no math in the cockpit."

After the ground FACs arrived, in late October, things moved fast. Mazar-i-Sharif fell, and then Kabul, and then Kandahar, marking the formal collapse of the Taliban. In the end the entire armada of fighters, AWACS, jammers, tankers, and rescue planes was dancing in the skies over Kandahar, every crew eager for a chance to do its thing, trying to stay out of the other crews' paths. The relentless pounding broke the spirits of the Taliban, whose forces began to defect in ever larger numbers.

By mid-November most concentrations of enemy fighters would disperse at the sound of a jet overhead. Some of the more stubborn ones, however, continued to hang tough. The F-15 crews would spot them at camps in the hills, but neither the jet noise nor even bombing runs seemed to faze them. But when they started hearing the *click! click! click!* of the servo motors steering a GBU-12 in for the kill, they would begin fleeing in all directions. By then, of course, it was too late. In truth, the only safe place to be was underground, and with bunker busters, and Special Forces guys prowling the hills, even the caves became unsafe. Some thought they could escape in a speeding car or truck, and a few years ago they would have been right—but Baldie's grille shot demonstrated the folly of that tactic. Afghanistan was the greatest pickle run in history.

The science of war will keep advancing. A half century from now the exploits of the Bold Tigers over Afghanistan will be as anachronistic as Saint-Exupéry's battling biplanes. Snitch's grandfather, a retired military pilot, clips and sends him articles about the coming of an age of UAVs and teases him about fliers' being "the limiting factor in aviation." Pilots and wizzos of the future will "fly" their machines from comfy chairs at a safe distance, with both feet on solid ground and bathroom facilities close at hand. Today's fighter jocks will reminisce to their grandchildren about what it was actually like to ride bullets high over the clouds, and to reign supreme in the night sky.

It will sound more glamorous then. For the fliers of the 391st it was sometimes hard to keep their eyes open on the ride home. Fatigue and relief from the stress of bombing runs would overtake them. Up there in their bubble canopy among the stars, to help stay awake, Baldie would chat nonstop with Two Fish, about their families, their futures, their friends, her plans to attend pilot school. ("Baldie, you took another one of those go pills, didn't you?" Two Fish would ask.) Slokes and Snitch ate their Thanksgiving meal high over the peaks of Pakistan. Before the sortie they had stocked Styrofoam carryout meal boxes with drumsticks, stuffing, cranberry sauce, and pumpkin pie—there had been quite a spread in the mess hall. Neither had wanted to eat a big meal before setting out on a nine-to-ten-hour flight. But with their bomb racks empty, Slokes put the F-15 on autopilot, muttering his thanks into the thin air of dawn, and the two feasted, finding the food by the fingerlights on their gloves. By that time the meal had grown very cold, but Slokes says, "It was definitely the most memorable Thanksgiving dinner of my life. Sorry, Mom."

On those long rides home, in the hours before the sun cracked the planet's purple rim, they would survey the jagged peaks of the Siah Range and peer out past the Gulf of Oman to the great fires that leap up from the oil fields of the United Arab Emirates. The seaport of Dubai glimmered like a jewel on the Persian Gulf coast, lit up so improbably at the edge of the desert that it looked as if someone had misplaced Las Vegas. Sometimes thunderstorms in the distance would flash waves of light across the clouds for hundreds of miles and throw sudden shadows across their cockpit. The constellation Orion was always over their heads on those fall and winter nights, as familiar and as distant as it was at home. Sometimes the radar stations along the Iranian coast would paint the jets ominously, and alarms would go off in the cockpits—a reminder of hazards still lurking in the dark.

And some nights the sky would explode with shooting stars. Showers of light. They moved in blue streaks across the heavens, one or two every couple of seconds. There were so many that the squadron's intel officer would warn the crews not to mistake them for enemy fire. Using their NOCs, the crews saw them as lines of bright white against a glowing field of green. ▀

Mark Bowden's most recent book, Finders Keepers, was published last month. He is also the author of Killing Pablo and Black Hawk Down. Bowden's article about Saddam Hussein, "Tales of the Tyrant," was The Atlantic's cover story in May.



A POST-SADDAM SCENARIO

*Iraq could become America's primary staging ground in the Middle East.
And the greatest beneficial effect could come next door, in Iran*

BY ROBERT D. KAPLAN

.....

The constellation of overseas bases with which the United States sustained its strategic posture throughout the Cold War was a matter not of design but of where Allied troops just happened to be when World War II and its aftershocks—the Greek Civil War and the Korean War—finally ended. The United States found itself with basing rights in western Germany, Japan, Korea, the eastern Mediterranean, and elsewhere. In particular, our former archenemy, Germany, precisely because America had played a large role in dismantling its Nazi regime, became the chief basing platform for U.S. troops in Eurasia—to such a degree that two generations of American soldiers became intimately familiar with Germany, learning its language and in many cases marrying its nationals. If the U.S. Army has any localitis, it is for Germany.

A vaguely similar scenario could follow an invasion of Iraq, which is the most logical place to relocate Middle Eastern U.S. bases in the twenty-first century. This conclusion stems not from any imperialist triumphalism but from its opposite: the realization that not only do our current bases in Saudi Arabia have a bleak future, but the Middle East in general is on the brink of an epochal passage that will weaken U.S. influence there in many places. Indeed, the relocation of our bases to Iraq would constitute an acceptance of dynamic change rather than a perpetuation of the status quo.

Two features of the current reality are particularly untenable: the presence of “unclean” infidel troops in the very Saudi kingdom charged with protecting the Muslim holy places, and the domination by Israeli overlords of three million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. Neither will stand indefinitely. President Bush’s refusal to force the Israelis out of the West Bank has heartened neoconservatives, but it is a temporary phenomenon—merely a matter of sequencing.

Only after we have achieved something more decisive in our war against al Qaeda, or have removed the Iraqi leadership, or both, can we pressure the Israelis into a staged withdrawal from the occupied territories. We would then be doing so from a position of newfound strength and would not appear to be giving in to the blackmail of those

September 11—category criminals, the Palestinian suicide bombers. But after the Israelis have reduced the frequency of suicide bombings (through whatever tactics are necessary), and after, say, the right-wing Israeli leader Ariel Sharon has passed from the scene, Bush, if he achieves a second term and thus faces no future elections, will act.

But first the immediate issue: Iraq. The level of repression in Iraq equals that in Romania under the Communist dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu or in the Soviet Union under Stalin; thus public opinion there is unknowable. Nevertheless, two historical cultural tendencies stand out in Iraq: urban secularism and a grim subservience. Whenever I visited Baghdad in the past, the office workers at their computer keyboards had the expressions that one imagines on slaves carrying buckets of mud up the steps of ancient ziggurats. These office workers labored incessantly; a cliché among Middle East specialists is that the Iraqis are the Germans of the Arab world (and the Egyptians are the Italians). Iraq was the most fiercely modernizing of Arab societies in the mid twentieth century, and all coups there since the toppling of the Hashemite dynasty, in 1958, have been avowedly secular.

Given the long climate of repression, the next regime change in Iraq might even resurrect the reputation not of any religious figure but of the brilliant, pro-Western, secular Prime Minister Nuri Said, who did more than any other Iraqi to build his country in the 1940s and 1950s. As in Romania, where the downfall of Ceaușescu resurrected the memory of Ion Antonescu, the pro-Hitler nationalist executed in 1946 by the new Communist government, the downfall of Iraq’s similarly suffocating autocracy could return the memory of the last great local politician murdered in the coup that set the country on the path to Saddam Hussein’s tyranny.

Iraq has a one-man thugocracy, so the removal of Saddam would threaten to disintegrate the entire ethnically riven country if we weren’t to act fast and pragmatically install people who could actually govern. Therefore we should forswear any evangelical lust to implement democracy overnight in a country with no tradition of it.

Our goal in Iraq should be a transitional secular dictatorship that unites the merchant classes across sectarian

lines and may in time, after the rebuilding of institutions and the economy, lead to a democratic alternative. In particular, a deliberately ambiguous relationship between the new Iraqi regime and the Kurds must be negotiated in advance of our invasion, so that the Kurds can claim real autonomy while the central government in Baghdad can also claim that the Kurdish areas are under its control. A transitional regime, not incidentally, would grant us the right to use local bases other than those in the northern, Kurdish-dominated free zone.

Keep in mind that the Middle East is a laboratory of pure power politics. For example, nothing impressed the Iranians so much as our accidental shooting down of an Iranian civilian airliner in 1988, which they believed was not an accident. Iran's subsequent cease-fire with Iraq was partly the result of that belief. Our dismantling the Iraqi regime would concentrate the minds of Iran's leaders as little else could.

Iran, with its 66 million people, is the Middle East's universal joint. Its internal politics are so complex that at times the country appears to have three competing governments: the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Sayyed Ali Khamenei and the goons in the security service; President Mohammad Khatami and his Western-tending elected government; and the former President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, whose *bazaar* power base has made him a mediator between the other two. Sometimes Iranian policy is the result of subtle arrangements among these three forces; other times it is the result of competition. The regimes of Iraq and Iran are fundamentally different, and so, therefore, are our challenges in the two countries.

Vastly more developed politically than Iraq, Iran has a system rather than a mere regime, however labyrinthine and inconvenient to our purposes that system may be. Nineteenth-century court diplomacy of the kind that Henry Kissinger successfully employed in China with Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai will not work in Iran, simply because it has too many important political players. Indeed, because so many major issues are matters of internal bargaining, the Iranian system is the very opposite of dynamic. Iran's foreign policy will change only when its collective leadership believes there is no other choice.

Iranian leaders were disappointed not to see an American diplomatic initiative in 1991, after the United States bombed Baghdad—which, like the shooting down of the civilian jet, had greatly impressed them. Also likely to have been impressive to them was President George W. Bush's "axis of evil" speech (Iran's orchestrated denunciations

notwithstanding). Overtures to the moderates in Iran's elected government, as the White House has already admitted, have not helped us—we will have to deal directly with the radicals, and that can be done only through a decisive military shock that affects their balance-of-power calculations.

The Iranian population is the most pro-American in the region, owing to the disastrous economic consequences of the Islamic revolution. A sea change in its leadership is a matter of when, not if. But a soft landing in Iran—rather than a violent counter-revolution, with the besieged clergy resorting to terrorism abroad—might be possible only if general amnesty is promised for those officials guilty of even the gravest human-rights violations.

Achieving an altered Iranian foreign policy would be vindication enough for dismantling the regime in Iraq.



This would undermine the Iranian-supported Hizbollah, in Lebanon, on Israel's northern border; would remove a strategic missile threat to Israel; and would prod Syria toward moderation. And it would allow for the creation of an informal, non-Arab alliance of the Near Eastern periphery, to include Iran, Israel, Turkey, and Eritrea. The Turks already have a military alliance with Israel. The Eritreans, whose long war with the formerly Marxist Ethiopia has inculcated in them a spirit of monastic isolation from their immediate neighbors, have also been developing strong ties to Israel. Eritrea has a secularized population and offers a strategic location with good port facilities near the Bab el Mandeb

Strait. All of this would help to provide a supportive context for a gradual Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza. A problem with the peace plan envisioned by President Bill Clinton and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, in the summer of 2000, was that coming so soon after Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon, it was perceived by many Arabs as an act of weakness rather than of strength. That is why Israel must be seen to improve its strategic position before it can again offer such a pullback.

Of course, many Palestinians will be unsatisfied until all of Israel is conquered. But in time, when no Israeli soldiers are to be seen in their towns, the seething frustration, particularly among youths, will turn inward toward the Palestinians' own Westernized and Christianized elites, in Ramallah and similar places, and also eastward toward Amman.

In regards to Jordan and our other allies, U.S. administrations, whether Republican or Democratic, are simply going to have to adapt to sustained turbulence in the years to come. They will get no sympathy from the media, or from an academic community that subscribes to the fallacy

of good outcomes, according to which there should always be a better alternative to dictators such as Hosni Mubarak, in Egypt; the Saudi royal family; and Pervez Musharraf, in Pakistan. Often there isn't. Indeed, the weakening of the brutal regime of Islam Karimov, in Uzbekistan, will not necessarily lead to a more enlightened alternative. It could just as likely ignite a civil war between Uzbeks and the ethnic

DISSECTIONS

Not only have the skin and flesh and parts of the skeleton of one of the anatomical effigies in the Musée de l'Homme been excised, stripped away, so that you don't just look at but through the thing—pink lungs, red kidneys and heart, tangles of yellowish nerves he seems snarled in, like a net;

not only are his eyes without eyelids, and so shallowly embedded beneath the blade of the brow, that they seem, with no shadow to modulate them, flung open in pain or fear; and not only is his gaze so frenziedly focused that he seems to be receiving everything, even our regard scraping across him as *blare*;

not only that, but when I looked more closely, I saw he was *real*, that he'd been constructed, reconstructed, on an actual skeleton: the nerves and organs were wire and plaster; but the armature, the staring skull, the spine and ribs, were varnished, oxidizing bone; someone was there, his personhood discernible, a self, a soul.

It was terribly disquieting, all that lonely dolor, that secret grief. I felt I was intruding, then, I don't know why, it came to me to pray, though I don't pray, I've unlearned how, to whom, or what, what fiction, what illusion, or, it wouldn't matter, what true thing, as mostly I've forgotten how to weep ... Only mostly, though.

Sometimes I can sense the tears in there, and sometimes, yes, they come, though rarely for a reason I'd have thought—a cello's voice will catch in mine, a swerve in a poem, and once, a death, someone I hardly knew, but I found myself sobbing, sobbing, for everyone I had known who'd died, and some who almost had.

In the next display hall, evolution: half, then quarter creatures, Australopithecus, Pithecanthropus, Cro-Magnon, sidle diffidently along their winding uphill path toward us. Flint and fire, science and song, and all of it coming to this, this unhealable self in myself who knows what I should know.

— C. K. WILLIAMS

*C. K. Williams teaches at Princeton University.
His collection of poems Repair won the Pulitzer Prize in 2000.
Another collection, The Singing, will be published next year.*

Tajiks who dominate the cities of Samarkand and Bukhara. Because Uzbekistan is demographically and politically the fulcrum of post-Soviet Central Asia, those advocating "nation-building" in Afghanistan should realize that in the coming years there could be quite a few more nations to rebuild in the region. For this reason some in the Pentagon are intrigued by a basing strategy that gives us options throughout Central Asia, even if some countries collapse and we have to deal with ethnic khanates.

Our success in the war on terrorism will be defined by our ability to keep Afghanistan and other places free of anti-American terrorists. And in many parts of the world that task will be carried out more efficiently by warlords of long standing, who have made their bones in previous conflicts, than by feeble central governments aping Western models. Of course we need to eliminate anti-American radicals (Gulbuddin Hekmatyar is a case in point) who are trying to topple Hamid Karzai's pro-Western regime. But that doesn't mean we should see Karzai's government as the only sovereign force in the country. Given that the apex of Afghan national cohesion, in the mid twentieth century, saw the Kabul-based regime of King Zahir Shah controlling little more than the major cities and towns and the ring road connecting them, the prospects for full-fledged nation-building in Afghanistan are not only dim but also peripheral to the war on terrorism. We forget that the December 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan did not spark the *mujahideen* uprising. The spark came in April of 1978, in the form of the Kabul regime's attempt to extend the power of the central government to the villages. However brutal and incompetent the methods were, one must keep in mind that Afghans have less of a tradition of a modern state than do Arabs or Persians.

In any case, the changes that may be about to unfold in the Middle East will clear Afghanistan from the front pages. In the late nineteenth century the Ottoman Empire, despite its weakness, tottered on. Its collapse had to wait for the cataclysm of World War I. Likewise, the Middle East is characterized by many weak regimes that will totter on until the next cataclysm—which the U.S. invasion of Iraq might well constitute. The real question is not whether the American military can topple Saddam's regime but whether the American public has the stomach for imperial involvement of a kind we have not known since the United States occupied Germany and Japan. ■

Robert D. Kaplan is a correspondent for The Atlantic. His most recent book is Warrior Politics: Why Leadership Demands a Pagan Ethos (2001).



THE FOUR HOLIDAYS OF THE APOCALYPSE *by Edward Sorel*

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— Ryan Bendixen



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VARIETIES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

A short story

BY JOHN UPDIKE

.....

There is no God: the revelation came to Dan Kellogg in the instant that he saw the World Trade Center South Tower fall. He lived in Cincinnati but happened to be in New York, visiting his daughter in Brooklyn Heights, with a top-floor view of Lower Manhattan, less than a mile away. He was still puzzling over the vast quantities of persistent oily smoke, and the nature of the myriad pieces of what seemed to be white cardboard fluttering within the smoke's dark column, and who and what the perpetrators and purpose of this event might have been, when, as abruptly as a girl letting fall her silken gown, the entire skyscraper dropped its sheath and vanished, with a silvery rippling noise. The earth below, which Dan could not see, groaned and spewed up a cloud of ash and pulverized matter that slowly, from his distant perspective, mushroomed upward. The sirens filling the air across the river continued to wail, with no change of pitch or urgency; the mob of uninvolved buildings, stone and glass, held their pose of blank, mute witness. Had Dan imagined hearing a choral shout, a cry of protest breaking against the silence of the sky—an operatic human noise at the base of a phenomenon so pitilessly inhuman? Or had he merely humanized the groan of concussion? He was aware of looking at a, for him, new scale of things—that of Blitzkrieg, of erupting volcanoes. The collapse had a sharp aftermath of silence; at least he heard nothing for some seconds.

Ten stories below his feet, two black parking-garage attendants loitered outside the mouth of the garage, one seated on an aluminum chair, carrying on a joshing conversation that, for all the sound that rose to Dan Kellogg, might have been under a roof of plate glass or in a silent movie. The garage attendants wore short-sleeved shirts, but summer's haze this September morning had been baked from the sky. The only cloud was man-made—the foul-colored, yellow-edged smoke drifting toward the east in a solid, continuously replenished mass. Dan could not quite believe that the tower had vanished. How could something so vast and intricate, an elaborately engineered upright hive teeming with people, mostly young, be dissolved by its

own weight so quickly, so casually? The laws of matter had functioned, was the answer. The event was small beneath the calm dome of sky. No hand of God had intervened, because there was none. God had no hands, no eyes, no heart, no anything.

Thus was Dan, an Episcopalian lawyer of sixty-three, brought late to the realization that comes to children with the death of a pet, to women with the loss of a child, to millions caught in the implacable course of war or plague. His revelation of cosmic emptiness thrilled him, though his own extinction was held within this new truth like one of the white rectangles weightlessly rising and spinning within the boiling column of smoke. He joined at last the run of mankind in its stoic atheism. He had fought this wisdom all his life, with prayer and evasion, with recourse to the piety of his Ohio ancestors and to ingenious and jaunty old books—Kierkegaard, Chesterton—read in adolescence and early manhood. But had he been in that building (its smoothly telescoping collapse in itself a sight of some beauty, like the color-enhanced stellar blooms of telescopically photographed supernovae, yet as quick as the toss of a scarf)—had he been in that building, would the weight of concrete and metal have been an ounce less, or hesitated a microsecond in its crushing, mincing, vaporizing descent?

No. The great No came upon him not in darkness, as religious fable would have it, but on a day of maximum visibility; “brutally clear” was how airplane pilots, interviewed after the event, described conditions. Only when Dan's revelation had shuddered through him did he reflect, with a watery spurt of panic, that his daughter, Gretchen, worked in finance—in midtown, it was true, but business now and then took her to the World Trade Center, to breakfast meetings at the very top, the top from which no one could have escaped.

Stunned, emptied, he returned from his point of vantage on the terrace to the interior of Gretchen's apartment. The stolid Anguillan nanny, Lucille, and Dan's younger granddaughter, Victoria, who was five and sick with a cold and thus not at school, sat in the library. The small room, papered

red, was lined with walnut shelves; the books went back to Gretchen's college and business-school days and included a number—Cold War thrillers, outdated medical texts—that had once belonged to her husband, from whom she was divorced, just as Dan Kellogg was divorced from her mother. Lucille had drawn the shade of the window looking toward Manhattan. She reported to Dan, "I tell her not to look out the window, but then the television has nothing but the disaster, every channel we switch to."

"Bad men," little Victoria told him eagerly, her tongue stumbling, her cold making her enunciation even harder to understand than usual, "bad men going to knock down *all* the buildings in New York City!"

"That's an awful lot of buildings, Vicky," he said. When he talked to children, something severe and legalistic within him resisted imprecision.

"Why does God let bad men do things?" Victoria asked.

He had an answer, a new one, to this, but he didn't give it. The child's face looked feverish, not from her cold but from what she had seen through the window before the shade was drawn. Dan gave the answer he had learned when still a believer: "Because He wants to give men the choice to be good or bad." Her face, so fine in detail and texture—brutally fine—considered this theology for a second.

Then she burst forth, flinging her arms wide: "Bad men do anything they want, anything at all!"

"Not always," he corrected. "Sometimes good men stop them. Most of the time, in fact."

In the shadowy room they seemed three conspirators. Lucille was softly rocking herself on the sofa, and made a cooing noise now and then. "Think of all them still in there, all the people," she crooned, as if to herself. "I was telling Vicky how on Anguilla when I was a girl, no one had electricity, and telephones were only for the police, who rode bicycles wherever they went on the island. The only crime was workers coming back from three months away being vengeful with their wives for some mischief. The tallest building two stories high, and when there was no moon people didn't leave their cabins." Then, in a less dreamy voice, one meant to broadcast reassurance to the listening child, she told Dan, "Her momma called five minutes ago, and working is over for today, she coming home but don't know how. She might have to be walking all that way from Thirty-fourth Street"

Dan himself had been planning, before returning to Cincinnati, to take the subway up to the Whitney Museum and see the Wayne Thiebaud show, which was soon to be dismantled. At Victoria's age he had dreamed of working for Walt Disney, making cartoon animals move and talk, and Thiebaud had done that for a while; Dan relished the touch of Disney in the artist's candy colors and his bouncy, plump draftsmanship. Viewing this show was suddenly impossible, part of an idyllic, less barricaded past.

"So we'll all just wait for Mommy," he said, trying to be

a leader. "I know," he announced. "Let's make Doughboy cookies for Mommy when she comes home! She'll be *hungry*." And he leaned over and poked Victoria in the tummy, as if she were the Doughboy in the television commercials.

But she didn't laugh or even smile. Her eyes, beneath her bangs and serious straight brows, were feverishly bright. She wanted to know what new and forbidden thing was happening on the other side of the window shade. And so did Lucille, but she denied herself turning on the television, and Dan denied himself another visit to the terrace to verify his desolating cosmic intuition.

In an hour Gretchen was home, safe and aghast and sweating with the unaccustomed exercise of marching across the Manhattan Bridge in a mob of others fleeing the island. Dan's daughter, at thirty-seven, was slim and hard and professional, a trim soldier-woman a far cry from both her timid, circumspect father and her indolent, fleshy mother. She turned on CNN on the little kitchen TV right away, and was not pleased by the smell of fresh-baked cookies. "We're trying to train Victoria away from sweets," she told her father, and when he explained how he and Lucille had sought to distract her, Gretchen said, "Let her watch a little. This is history. This is huge. It can't be hidden." In the Heights, she told them, auto traffic had ceased, and men and women with briefcases, dusted with ash, were stalking up the middle of Henry Street. She hid the warm cookies on an out-of-reach shelf; she sent Lucille off to pick up Victoria's older sister, Hermione, at her day school, and sent her father to the supermarket with a shopping list while she and Victoria went to the bank to withdraw plenty of cash, just in case society broke down.

On Montague Street an early lunch hour was in progress, and voices twanged over the outdoor tables much as usual, though self-consciously, somehow, as if unseen television cameras were grinding away. The street scene seemed enacted; even the boys loafing outside the supermarket appeared to be conscious of a new attention bearing on them, a new importance in the thickened air. The air smelled caustic and snowed flurrying motes of ash. Sensory impressions hit Dan harder than usual, because God had been purged from his brain. In his previous life commonsense atheism had not been good enough for him, nor had it seemed sufficiently gracious toward the miraculous universe. Now he had been shown how little the universe cared for his good opinion. He pushed his cart along. The supermarket was not crowded with panic shoppers but rather empty instead, and seemed darker than usual, sickly and crepuscular, like one of those pre-Christian underworlds, Hades or Sheol. People moved through the aisles, past the bins of bagels and shelves of gourmet snacks, as if for the first time, haltingly, and scanned one another's faces for a recognition that was almost there, a greeting on the tips of their tongues.



Dan returned to the apartment laden with plastic bags, two on each hand; the handles, stretched thin by the weight of oranges and milk and cranberry juice, had dug into his palms. Gretchen had returned with money and several plans. Already, signs advertising communal events were going up on lampposts: blood donations could be made at the Marriott, near Borough Hall, and Grace Church would host a special service at six.

In the subdued camaraderie of the crowd at the Marriott the father and daughter filled out laborious forms and were told, by bullhorn, to go home, the blood bank was overflowing, there was no more need for the present, but if any developed, their names were on record. At the church, where he and the four females he escorted found room in a back pew, Dan marveled at the human animal: Like dogs, we creep back to lick the hand of a God who, if He exists, has just given us a vicious kick. The harder He kicks, the more fervently we cringe and creep forward to lick His hand. The great old church, a relic of post-Civil War ecclesiastical prosperity, was for this occasion full, and the minister, a short young woman wearing a bell of glossy hair, announced in a clarion voice that at that moment several members of this congregation were still among the missing. She read their names. Let us pray for their safety, she said, and for the souls of all who perished today, and

for the fate of this great nation. With an anatomical rustle that soared into the murk of the stony vaults above them, all bowed their heads.

Then and thereafter Dan felt detached. His sense of alienation persisted in the weeks that followed, as flags sprang from every porch bracket and *God Bless America* was written in shaving cream on every shop window. Eventually, back in Cincinnati, having returned, two days late, by bus, he looked across a river not to smoking towers but to Kentucky, where each pickup truck sprouted a soon tattered emblem of national pride and defiance. Heartland religiosity, though its fundamentalism and puritanism had often made him wince, was something Dan had been comfortable with; now it seemed barbaric. On television the President clumsily grasped the rhetoric of war, got used to it, and then got good at it. The nightly news showed how impromptu shrines had sprung up on sidewalks and outside fire stations across New York City. Candles guttered under color photocopies of the missing; memorial flowers wilted in their paper cones and plastic sheaths. Dan found himself irritated by the grotesque and pitiable sight of a great modern nation attempting to heal itself through the tired old magic of flags and candles—the human spirit since time immemorial pouring its colorful vain gestures into the void.

SETH COHEN

A week or so before Dan's revelation, a stocky young Muslim—called, like millions of his co-religionists around the world, Mohamed—briefly hesitated before ordering a fifth Scotch on the rocks in a dim, unholy place, a one-story roadside strip joint on Florida's east coast. His companion, a younger, thinner man named Nawaf, lifted his slender hand from the table as if to protest and then let it weightlessly fall back. Their instructions were to blend in, and getting drunk was surely a way of merging with America, this unclean society disfigured by an appalling laxity of laws and an electronic delirium of supposed opportunities and pleasures. The very air, air-conditioned, tasted of falsity. The whiskey burned in Mohamed's throat like a fire against which he must repeatedly test his courage.

On the shallow stage, ignored by most of the customers scattered at small tables and only now and then brushed by his own glance, a young woman, naked save for strategic patches of tinsel and a dusting of glitter, writhed around a

brass pole to a virtually mocking mutter of tuneless music. She was as lean as a starveling boy but for the protuberances of fat that distinguish women; these, Mohamed knew, had been swollen by injection to seem tautly round and perfectly doll-like. The whore was entwining herself upside down around her pole, and scissoring open her legs so that a tinsel thong battered back at the light. Her long hair hung in a heavy platinum sheet to the stage floor, which had been dirtied by her sisters' feet. There were three dancers: a Negress who performed barefoot, flashing soles and palms the color of silver polish; a raven-haired, onyx-eyed minx who wore high heels and kept fluttering her tongue between her lips; and the blonde, who danced least persuasively, with motions mechanically repeated while her eyes, their ice-blue outlined in thick black as if she were in an Egyptian wall painting, stared into the darkness without seeing. She did not see him, nor did he in his soul see her. Nawaf—with whom Mohamed was rehearsing once again the details of their enterprise, its many finely interlocked and synchronized parts, down to the last-minute cell-phone calls that gave the final go-ahead—had been drinking sweet drinks called daiquiris and had hurriedly gone to the bathroom. Nawaf was young and in this country but two months; its food was still poison to him. He had not grown Mohamed's impervious shell. The whore's globular breasts hung down parallel to her lowered sheet of hair while her shaved or plucked crotch twinkled and flashed. Through half-shut eyes and the shifting transparencies of whiskey Mohamed fancied a semblance to the ignorant *fellaheen's* conception of Paradise, where dark-eyed virgins wait on silken couches, among flowing rivers, to serve the martyrs delicious fruit. But they are manifestations, these houris, of the final purity, white in their limbs and in the whites of their eyes, radiant negatives of the underfed sluts who mechanically writhed on this soiled stage.

Another slut, the middle-aged waitress, wrinkled and thickened, a pot of curdled lewdness, of soured American opportunities, was waving a slip of paper at him. "Going off duty ... finish up my tables ... forty-eight dollars." Her twanging accent was difficult to penetrate, and from her agitation he gathered that this was not the first time this evening that he had offended her.

He did not see why he should hurry to pay. Nawaf was still in the bathroom, and the sandwiches they had ordered were still on the table, uneaten. That was it: she had offered some time ago—an hour? ten minutes? his memory was uncertain—to clear the table, and he had told her that he was not finished, though in fact the food disgusted him. It was, like everything in this country, excessive and wasteful—an open hot-roast-beef sandwich, not rare but gray, now cold and limp on its bread, dead meat scattered beneath his hands, far below them somehow in the chilled layers of air, and the french fries, too, and the coleslaw, garbage not fit for a street dog. Yet he kept thinking that he

HUMMINGBIRD

No matter how fast my heart,
yours beats faster.

What would ever
make you stay?

A rose named for Frédéric Mistral.
The Arctic Queen Nectarine.

Orchids in Malawi
(over four hundred species).

Kashmiri meadows, a perfume
that almost hurts.

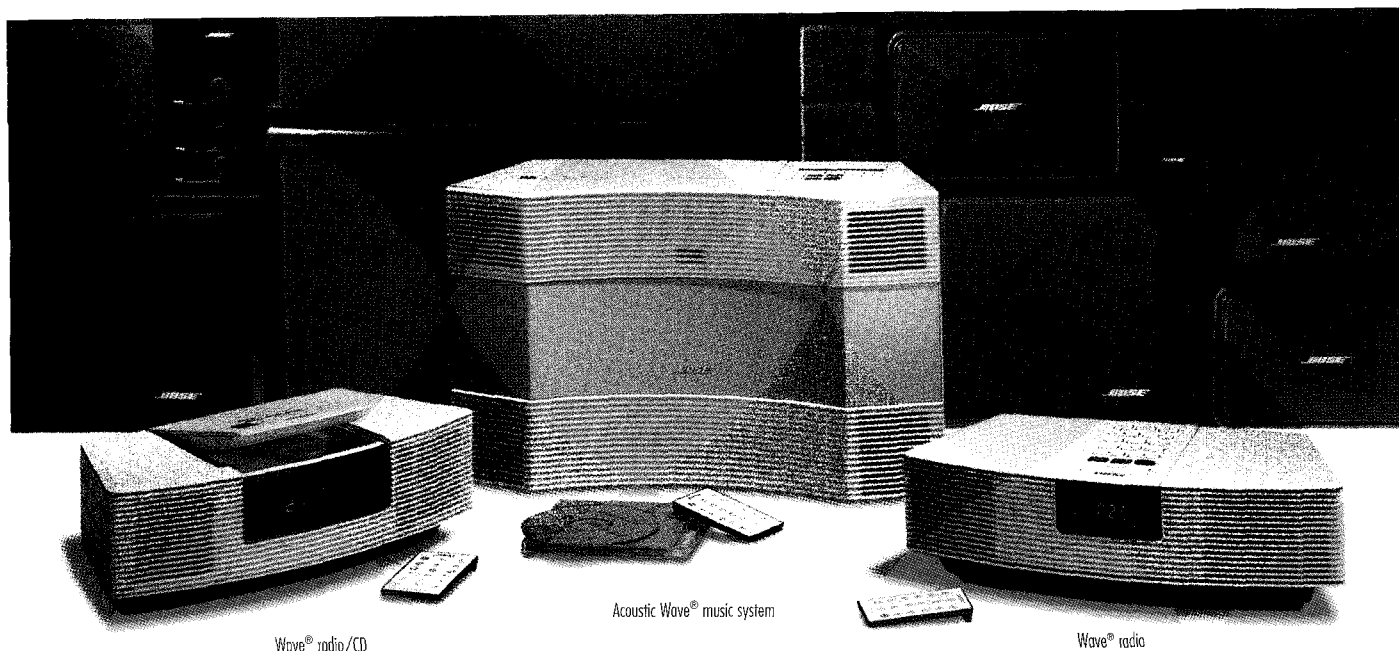
Perhaps a miraculous shift
—red or dress or attitude—

would keep you hovering here
more than a millisecond touch-and-go.

No matter how fast my heart,
yours beats faster.

—SUE STANDING

Sue Standing directs the creative-writing program at Wheaton College and is the author of Amphibious Weather, Deception Pass, and Gravida. Her new collection of poems, False Horizon, will be published next spring.



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would turn to it, to soften the burning of the whiskey while he spoke sharply to Nawaf, hardening the younger man's shell for the great deed that had been laid out like a precision drawing in an engineering class. Mohamed had studied engineering among the infidels, learning the mathematics they had stolen centuries ago from the Arabs.

He must eat, for the day, the fateful morning, of culmination was approaching, and he must be strong, his hands and nerves inflexibly steady, his body vital and pure. The

greatness of the deed held within him pressed upward like a species of nausea, straining his throat with a desire to cry out, to proclaim, as did the prophet whose name he bore, the magnificence, beyond all virtues and qualities imaginable on earth, of God and His justice. *For the unbelievers We have prepared fetters and chains, and a blazing Fire. Flames of fire shall be lashed at you, and melted brass.*

The blonde whore flicked away the sparkling thong and with spread legs waddled around the pole showing her shaved slit, an awkward, ugly maneuver that won scattered cheers from the jaded tables in the darkness. Nawaf returned, looking paler. He had been sick, he confessed. Mohamed felt a great love for his brother in conspiracy, the younger brother he had never had; he had been raised in a flowery Cairo suburb with a quartet of sisters. It was to keep them from ending as sluts that he had dedicated himself to the holy cause. They were too light-headed to know that the temptations twittering at them from television and radio were from Satan, designed to lure them into eternal mire. Their parents, in their European clothes, their third-rate prosperity measured out in imitation Western goods, were blind to the evil they wrought upon their children. Hoarding their comforts in their curtained, servant-run house in Giza, they were like eyeless cave creatures, blind to the grandeur of the One who will wrathfully reduce this world and its distractions to a desert. Mohamed carried that sublime desert, its night sky clamorous with stars, within him. *When the sky is rent asunder; when the stars are scattered and the oceans roll together; when the graves tumble in ruin; each soul shall know what it has done and what it has failed to do.*

The waitress had returned, accompanied by a man, a hireling, the bald bartender in a yellow T-shirt advertising something in three-dimensional speeding letters, a beer or perhaps a sports team—Mohamed could not quite bring it into focus. Nawaf looked worried; a warmth of fear came from him, and his movements betrayed a desire to leave. Mohamed quenched the boy's weak start of apology with a touch on his forearm and stood to confront the hireling in the speeding T-shirt. Standing so quickly dizzied him but did not weaken his wits or dull his awareness of the movements around him. A fresh girl on the stage, the *abdah* with bare feet again, dressed in filmy scarves that would come off, altered the light of the place, lifting its darkness somewhat as the spotlight played upon her. Pale faces, natives of this coast, turned to witness the quarrel. Within Mohamed his great secret felt an eggshell's thickness from bursting forth. More than once small mishaps and moments of friction—a traffic ticket, an INS summons, an irritated slip of the tongue with an inquisitive neighbor seeking, in that doglike American way, to be friendly—had threatened to expose the whole elaborate structure; but the All-Merciful had extended His protecting hand. Mohamed felt himself mighty in his power to restrain his tongue, a muscle that

SIR DAVID BREWSTER'S TOY

In this tube you see
At the far end a strew of
Colored-glass debris—

Which, however, grows
Upon reflection to an
Intricate pied rose,

Flushed with sun, that might,
Set in some cathedral's wall,
Paraphrase the light.

Now, at the least shake,
The many colors jumble
And abruptly make

The rose rearrange,
Adding to form and splendor
The release of change.

Rattle it afresh
And see its coruscating
Flinders quickly mesh,

Fashioning once more
A fine sixfold gaudiness
Never seen before.

Many prophets claim
That Heaven's joys, though endless,
Are not twice the same;

This kaleidoscope
Can, in that connection, give
Exercise in hope.

—RICHARD WILBUR

Richard Wilbur was the poet laureate of the United States in 1987. His most recent book is Mayflies (2000).

moves mountains. He produced his wallet and opened it to display the thickness of twenties and fifties and even hundreds, depicting in dry green engraving the dead heroes of this godless democracy. "Plenty to pay your bill," he told the threatening man in the yellow T-shirt. "And look, fellow, look here—" Not content with this demonstration of potency, Mohamed showed, too swiftly for a close examination, the card registering him in flying school and another, forged in Germany, stating that he was a licensed pilot. "I am a pilot."

Impressed and mollified, his foe asked, in the languid accents of a degenerate steeped in drugs, "Hey, cool. What airline?"

With unhesitating inspiration—it was one of those near truths that in the utterance become true, as the revealed faith is true, and the coming fruits of faith, the luminous boiling Fire—Mohamed said, "American." It sounded so just, so prophetic. He repeated it: "American Air Lines."

From where Jim Finch sat in his cubicle, about a third of the way into the vast floor full of bond traders and their computer monitors, the building's windows held a view of mostly sky, but if he stood, he could see New Jersey's low blue shore beyond the Statue of Liberty. From this height even the statue, facing the other way, looked small, like the souvenir statuettes for sale in every tourist trap. Jim came each morning from Jersey (three children and four bedrooms on a tenth of an acre in East Newark), and from where he lived he could see, picking his spots between asphalt rooftops and trees, the building in which he worked. To impress the kids he tried to locate his exact floor, counting down six from the top, though in truth it was hard from that distance to be certain; the skyscraper was built of vertical ribs that made individual floors and windows run together. Steel tubes, like a row of drinking straws, held the building up, so the windows seemed narrower than they should be, and the view out was more up and down than sideways. Today the sky's blank blue looked like a row of smooth plastic panels, except that curling gusts of smoke and flickering pieces of paper were invading the blue from below.

His cell phone rang. Jim's motion of picking it off his belt was habitual and instant, like a snake's strike. But instead of business it was Marcy, back in New Jersey. "Jim, honey," she said, "don't hate me, I forgot to say, you went out the door so fast, when you pick up the cleaning on the way home could you swing by the Pathmark and pick up a half gallon of whole milk and maybe check out their cantaloupes?"

"Okay, sure. Hey, Marcy—"

"The ones last week went straight from green to punky, but he said he'd have better ones in on Monday. The skins should give a little, but your thumb shouldn't leave a dent." He watched a piece of charred insulation rise into view and

then float away while she was going on: "For the milk, we have plenty of skim for ourselves, but Frankie and Kristen, the way they're growing, they just wolf it down; she's as bad as he is. Honest, I meant to pick some up but the cart was already so full. *Sorry, hon.*"

"Marcy, there's something—"

"Any dessert you'd like for yourself, buy it. And maybe—be sure to check the sell-by date—a half-dozen eggs, the *large* size, not the *extra* large. But don't forget Annie has that event at the church hall tonight, six-thirty, the beginning of indoor soccer, she's *very* anxious and wants us both there."

"Honey—"

"The young assistant minister scares her. She says he's uptight, he wants too much to win."

"Hey, could you please for Chrissake shut up?"

"What is it, Jim? You sound strange."

"Something strange has happened, I don't know what. We heard this terrible thump underneath us about three minutes ago. I thought it was on the street, but it sounded closer. Everything shook, and now I can see smoke out the windows. The interior phone lines are all out. People have come back saying the elevators aren't working and the stairs are full of smoke."

"Oh, my God."

"Nobody's panicking—I mean almost nobody. I'm sure it'll work out. I mean, how bad can it be?"

"Oh, my God."

"Stop saying that, honey. It'll get fixed, they'll figure it out. I can't keep talking, they got to start moving us somewhere. Hey, Marcy. You won't believe this, but the floor's warm. Actually fucking *warm*."

"Oh, Jimmy, do something; *do* something. Hang up whenever you have to. I've always hated those buildings, and you being so high."

"Listen, Marcy. What phone are you on? The upstairs portable?"

"Yes." Her voice trembled, putting extra syllables into the word, *ye-ess*, like a child scared that she has done wrong and will be punished. Across the miles between them they shared the sensation of being chastened children—a rubbed, watery feeling in their abdomens.

"Go into Annie's room and look out the window. Tell me what you see."

While he waited, he became aware of human movement among the desks, herd movement, with thumps and shouts and screams, but he didn't feel it had a direction he should join. A rising smell, a tarry industrial smell, oily and sweet, reminded him of airport runways, and the heat vibrations one sees while waiting to take off.

"Jim?"

"Still here. What can you see from Annie's window?"

"Oh, God, smoke! From pretty near the top; it's like the whole building is a horrible kind of cigar. A kind of black

ink is running down between the grooves. What can it be? Remember that missile that maybe brought down that plane off Long Island?"

"Don't be dumb. Some kind of malfunction, it must be, within the building. The walls have enough wiring to fry China if there's a short. Don't worry, they'll figure it out. They have guys paid a fortune to sit around and plan how to handle events like this. Still, I must say—"

"What, Jimmy? What must you say?"

"I was starting to say it's getting damn hard to breathe in here. Somebody just smashed a window. They're chucking chairs right through the windows." Now his voice was shaky. "Hey, Marcy?"

"Yes?"

"I don't know, honey, but maybe this isn't so good."

"The smoke is coming from a floor under yours," she offered hopefully, shakily. "I can't count how many."

"Don't try." Her voice was a connection to the world, but it was entangling him, holding him back. "Listen. Marcy. In case I don't make it. I love you."

"Oh, my God! Don't say it! Just be normal!"

"I can't be normal. This isn't normal."

"Can't you get up to a higher floor and wait on the roof?"

"I think people have tried it and there's too much smoke in the stairways. It's getting hard to see. Can you tell the kids how much I love them?"

"Ye-ess." Breathlessly. She wasn't arguing. It wasn't like her; her giving up like this frightened him.

He tried to think practically. "All the stuff you need should be in the filing cabinet beside my desk, the middle drawer. Lenny Palotta can help you; he has the mutual-fund stuff, and the insurance policies."

"God, don't, darling. Don't think that way. Just get out, can't you?"

"Sure, probably." People were moving toward the windows—it was the coolest place, the place to breathe, a hundred stories in the air, the height of an airplane tucking its wheels back with that little concussion and snap. "But, just in case, you do whatever you want."

"What do you mean, Jim, do whatever I want?"

"I mean, you know, live your life. Do what looks best for yourself and the kids. Don't let anything cramp your style. Tell Annie in case I miss it that I wanted to be there tonight." Of all things, this made him want to cry, the image of his plump little daughter in soccer shorts, scared and pink in the face.

"Cramp my style?"

"My blessing, for Chrissake, Marcy. I'm putting a blessing on anything you decide to do. It's all right. Feel free."

"Oh, Jimmy, no. How can this be happening?"

He couldn't talk more; the smoke, the heat, the stink, were chasing him to the windows, where silhouettes were climbing up between the vertical ribs. He replaced the phone

on his belt deftly; he instinctively grabbed his suit coat and sprinted, crouching, across the hot floor to his co-workers clustered at the windows. They were his family now, they had been his daytime family for years. They were problem solvers and would show him what to do. Like an airplane seizing altitude in its wings, he left gravity behind; connections were breaking, obligations falling away. He felt for those seconds as light as a newborn.

The nice young man beside her told her he was in sales management, on his way to a telecom convention in San Francisco, but he played rugby on weekends for exercise. It surprised Caroline that anyone in the United States played rugby after college. Ages ago in her long life, after the war, she had spent a year in England and had been taken to a rugby game, in Cambridge. She remembered the heavy-thighed men in shorts and striped shirts, struggling in the mud under low clouds in the damp, chilly air, pushing at each other and, for spurts, carrying the slippery oval ball in a two-handed, sashaying way that looked comically girlish to eyes accustomed to American football. To those same eyes it seemed curious that they played nearly naked, in short shorts, and yet no one seemed to get hurt.

The introductory courtesies came early in the flight, out of Newark. The plane had pushed into the air and climbed and banked so that the wing tip, with its little skinny aerial or whatever that was, threatened, it seemed to her, to spill them back into the sun-streaked prairie of streets and housetops and highways and dulling September trees below. Caroline had flown a great deal in her life, more than she had ever expected to as a child, when flying was something heroes did, test pilots and Lindbergh, and the whole family would rush out into the yard to see a blimp float overhead. Her first flights had been to college, in Ohio, into the old Cleveland Hopkins Airport, in bumpy two-engine prop planes. As she aged, she flew to visit relatives in St. Louis and Minneapolis; to England for her postgraduate year; to the Caribbean and Arizona and Europe on vacations with her husband, and on some of his lecture trips as he became distinguished; on three-day visits to her children when they married and scattered, and for matriarchal viewings of new grandchildren, and the ceremonies that these generated as they grew and aged; and even on an expensive around-the-world tour after her husband died, a self-indulgence in her grief. All in all she couldn't begin to count how many hundreds of thousands of miles she had flown, but she had never really liked it—the panicky run into lift-off, the abrupt banking, the unexplained changes in the sound of the engines, the sudden mysterious sharp jiggling over the ocean, your coffee swinging in your cup, your heart in your throat. The planes had gotten bigger and smoother. Some of those early flights, looking back, were little better than amusement-park rides that were designed

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to be terrifying—those little silver turboprops that bounced over the Appalachians, with tiny rivers below catching the sun; the stubby island-hoppers out of San Juan, where you walked steeply up the aisle, and the black stewardesses gave you candy to suck for pressure in your ears. Going off to college, she would dress up as if for a formal tea, even—could it be?—white gloves. Now these big broad jets were like buses; people wore any old disgusting thing and never looked up from their laptops and acted personally injured if they didn't land on time to the minute, as if they were riding railroad tracks in the sky.

The nice young man, once the pilot's drawl had given permission to move about and use laptops, had asked her if she would mind, since so many seats were empty, if he moved to another and gave them both more room. She thought his asking was dear; it showed a good old-fashioned upbringing. She watched him set up a little office

IT WAS YOKED TO A BLACK HUNGER

The raven lifted.

Circled like a skate on a groove of air—

the fur on the hare ruffled up.

Ruffling up,

each follicle trying

to leave that meat

as the raven swooped down, poked its beak

into that beating snuff,

the rabbit not dead not yet—

it pecked and pecked, until the one red spot welled up.

A thin steam from the rabbit, like a wick blown out.

The snow sparkling.

And the raven cocked its black eye, dipped its beak
in the red pool it had made—

for the ink of elegy.

—DANA LEVIN

Dana Levin's book In the Surgical Theatre won the 1999 American Poetry Review/Honickman First Book prize and numerous other awards. Levin directs the College of Santa Fe Creative Writing Program.

for himself in two seats across the aisle, and then she studied the terrain five miles below, familiar to her from those first nervous flights of hers, to Ohio so many years and journeys ago. She recognized the Delaware, and then the Susquehanna; and while waiting for the stewardess with her rattling drinks cart to reach the midsection of the plane, she must have dozed, because she awoke as if rudely shaken. The airplane was jiggling and bucking; it had changed personality.

Yet the faces around her showed no alarm, and the heads she could see above the seatbacks were still. A young man standing in front of the first-class curtain was saying something she couldn't quite hear. He was slender, with skimpy facial hair along his jawline, and touchingly graceful and hesitant in the way he used his hands. He seemed to have no weapon, yet he had everyone's attention, and the clumsy change in the way the plane was being handled connected somehow to him. He had an aura of nervous excitement; his eyes showed too much white. Another young man, plumper, came out from behind the curtains and then went back. Before he went back, he shouted something she heard as "Stay in your seats, no harm will come!" She realized that these boys did not know much English, so the men in front trying to talk to the boy with the wispy beard were wasting their breath. The noise of conversation in the airplane had risen like that at a cocktail party, or in a rainy-day classroom, and here and there people were talking into their cell phones, including the rugby player across the aisle, whose hand as it held the little gadget to his ear looked massive, with its red knuckles and broad wedding ring.

The engines spasmodically wheezed and a sudden tilt brought her heart up into her throat; the plane was turning. The great wing next to her window leaned glinting above the gray-green earth. The land below looked like Ohio now, flatter than the Alleghenies, and she saw a smoky city that could be Akron or Youngstown. The sun had shifted to her side of the plane, coming in at an angle that bothered her eyes. A cataract operation two years before had restored childhood's bright colors and sharp edges but left her corneas sensitive to light. The plane must be heading southeast, back to Pennsylvania. She tried to think it through, to picture the plane's exact direction, yet she was still dozy; the flight had been scheduled to leave at eight, and that had meant setting the alarm in Princeton for five-thirty. Her skin had broken out in a sweat. Her body was terrified before her mind caught up. What was foremost in her mind was the simple wish, fervent enough to be a prayer, that the plane might be taken, like an easily damaged toy, out of those invisible hands that were giving it such a jerky, panicky, incompetent ride.

Caroline wondered why the boy up front, evidently a hijacker, was letting so many passengers talk on their telephones; perhaps it was a way to keep them calm. He came

down the aisle a little way into the economy section and then retreated; in warning he held up something metallic, a small knife of some sort, the kind that slides open to cut boxes, but his face, with its beard not quite a beard, looked slack and pasty. His mind was elsewhere, somewhere beyond. He wore black jeans and a long-sleeved red-checked shirt; he could have been a young computer whiz on his way to Silicon Valley. She had two grandsons at dot-coms; they dressed like farmhands, like hippies decades ago, believing they loved the earth; but this boy had no pencils or pens in his shirt pocket, the way her grandsons did. He had that baby knife and that pale skin and a head of thick black hair above eyebrows that nearly met in the middle, over his distracted, glittering gaze. Why wouldn't he look at anybody?

How humiliating, this sweating she was doing into her underwear. She would smell when she got off the plane, under the wool dress she had put on thinking that it was always cool in Tiburon, however hot in Princeton. The redwoods, the Bay breezes—she realized that she might not reach them today. They would land at some obscure airport, and a long standoff of negotiations would begin. When they started to release hostages, however, an old lady would be among the first.

Eddies of communication—hand signals, eye motions, conversations increasingly blatant and emphatic as the slack-faced young hijacker's obliviousness dawned on everyone—moved through the plane. The people up front had glimpsed something when the first-class curtain had been pulled aside; word of whatever it was spread back, skipping around her inaudibly yet chilling her damp skin. Others had learned something through their telephones that they urgently had to share. Young men in their white shirts and ties gathered in the aisle and had a conference of some sort, a huddle, right near her, around the seat of that nice rugby player. Not a huddle, a *scrum*—that was the word they had used in England.

She tried to eavesdrop but heard only excited muttering, and then the distinct word "yes," repeated in several men's voices. They had voted. The slender young Arab moved down the aisle, hopefully gesturing for people to sit down. The plane was still rocking in those unseen hands, jerking and tilting, but the rugby player stood up with the others—he was taller than she had realized, with those huge wrists jutting from his French cuffs—and they all faced forward. She was looking up and caught his eye; he smiled and gave her a thumbs-up. She heard a voice, another young man's, say, "You guys ready? Let's roll."

Somewhere in front of her a baby began to cry. Caroline hadn't realized that a baby was on the flight. The voice of the young mother sounded tense, but the crying stopped; perhaps she had replaced a pacifier. From farther up front came yelps and another woman's cry: a middle-aged woman's, indignant and coarse. The roaring engines made sounds hard to distinguish. The young man with the knife disap-

peared behind the broad shoulders and white shirts of the husky American men. The shirts in turn disappeared behind the blue first-class curtain, and there were thumping sounds, and the clatter of a serving cart, while a fearful gabble arose from the passengers still in their seats.

The airplane lurched more violently than ever before, and Caroline felt, as surely as if the wires and levers controlling the great mechanism were her own sinews and bones, that control had been lost—something crucial had been severed. From the wing came a high grinding noise; through her porthole she saw the flaps strain erect, exposing their valves, and the vast tapering wing, with its indifferent little aerial at the very tip and its aluminum segments stenciled with warnings to mechanics, seem to stand on end; the intricate stiff entity of it was heeling beyond any angle of possible recovery. The largeness of everything, the plane and the planet Earth and the transparent miles between them, struck her much as when the bandages on her eyes had been removed, giving her back the world in its shocking unsoftened colors. Her body was hanging sideways in the seat belt, so heavily it hurt.

Through the scratched plastic window the earth in its rural detail—a few houses and outbuildings, a green blob of woods, a fenced field, a lonely road—swung across her vision while her ears popped, and she realized that, nightmarish though it was, this was real, the reality beneath everything, this surge into the maw of gravity. She had time for a prayer, but her brain was flung into wordlessness; she felt upside down, and the tortured engine near her ear was making everything shake. She was meeting the truth that her parents and all the protectors of her long life had implied: the path of safety is slippery and narrow. *Mercy, Caroline managed to think. Dear Lord, have mercy.*

Dan stood outside his daughter's apartment, on the sooty tiled terrace from which he had seen the tower collapse. In the six months since then news events had tended to corroborate his revelation. A woman in Texas was being tried for systematically drowning her five children; Catholic priests were revealed to have molested their immature charges in numbers larger than ever imagined or confessed; almost every week, somewhere in the United States, angry or despairing or berserk fathers murdered their wives or ex-wives and their children and then, as if in adequate atonement, killed themselves. Meanwhile, war had been declared and pursued, with its usual toll of inane deaths—colliding helicopters, stray bombs, false intelligence, fatal muddle unmitigated by any biblical dignity of vengeance or self-sacrifice. The masterminds of evil remained at large; the surrendered enemies appeared exhausted and confused—pathetic small fry. They complained about the climate of Cuba and the shortage of suitable mullahs. They claimed, and others stridently claimed for them, their international legal rights. Religious

slaughters occurred in India and Israel, fires and floods and plagues elsewhere. The world tumbled on, spewing out death and pain like an engine off the tracks.

His younger granddaughter, his fellow witness to the most spectacular of recent catastrophes, solemnly informed Dan that all the dogs of New York City had bleeding paws, from looking through wreckage for dead people.

Gretchen, the tough-minded survivor of divorce, had not prevented the child from gathering what she could from the newspapers and television. "It's turned her into a real news hawk," she had dryly explained. "Hermione, on the other hand, refused from Day One to have anything to do with it. It wasn't ladylike, and she's disdained it all. She says such things aren't appropriate for children. She can actually pronounce 'appropriate.' But for Vicky, it would have been unhealthy, really, Daddy, to try to shelter her from what everybody knew, what all her schoolmates talked about. After all, compared with children in Bosnia and Afghanistan she's still pretty well off."

"Not *all* the dogs, Victoria," Dan told his granddaughter, "just a few trained for a certain special job, and wearing little leather booties that nice people made for them. Most people are very nice," he said.

The child stared up at him pugnaciously, a bit doubtful but wanting to agree. In six months she had grown; her eyes, a chalky pale blue beneath level brows, entertained more subtle expressions; at moments, especially when she was thinking to herself, he could see stir, in the childish fine perfection of her face, the seeds of feminine mystery and of her mature beauty.

Lucille, within earshot, said, so the child would overhear, "Vicky, she so interested in all the developments. She know how that terrible mess almost cleaned up now, and the two blue searchlights there as a monument, we see them every night."

Victoria explained to her grandfather, "They mean all the people in there have gone up to heaven."

By daylight, from the terrace, the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center were simply not there. Their stark form, like that of two cubes projected skyward by some computer trick, had registered but delicately above the old-fashioned visual thicket of Lower Manhattan. Rectangular clouds of glass and aluminum, they had been wiped from the city's silhouette. They were not there, but Dan was here, and God with him: the atheistic expunging had not occurred. His church pledge needed to be delivered in its weekly envelopes; a minor committee (Property Maintenance and Improvement) of which he was a member continued to meet. As tended to be true in Cincinnati, the Episcopal church was conservative, presenting a stream of Cranmer's words in which the mind could lose itself. Dan would have missed the mild-mannered fellowship—the handshakes in the Gothic narthex, the awkward passing of the peace. Why punish with his non-attendance, in protest of something God

and not they had done, a flock of polite people for whom periodically chorusing the Apostles' Creed was part, and not the very least part, of getting along, of doing their best, of being decent citizens? He would miss the Sunday-morning assembly, the smell of waxed pews and musty kneeling cushions, the reckless sense of an unlikely wager, the taste of the tasteless wafer in his mouth.

While he stood there ten stories above the Brooklyn alley (where the two attendants, in the mild March air, again sat joshing at the entrance to their parking garage), the towers' distant absence seemed a light throwing a shadow behind him, a weak shadow, but inextricable from his presence—the price, it could be said, of his living presence. He was alive, and a shadowy God in him. Human consciousness had curious properties. However big things were, it could encompass them, as if it were even bigger. And it kept insisting on making a narrative of his life, however nonsensically truncated the lives of others—crushed in an instant, or snapped off on the birthing table—had been.

Gretchen and Victoria, his progeny, his tickets to genetic perpetuation, ventured out gingerly onto the terrace. "Amazing," his daughter said, seeking to read his thoughts, "how the not-there-ness remains so haunting. Sometimes you still see them in old ads, where the admen haven't noticed or taken the trouble to airbrush them out of the background, and it's a thrill. It feels illicit. A lot of these yuppie movies and TV serials have a glimpse of the towers, from SoHo or the Staten Island ferry or wherever, and now they've been collected on a tape, like the kisses in *Cinema Paradiso*. They've become a kind of cult."

Victoria eagerly volunteered, "Someday, when all the bad men are gone, they'll put them *back*, just *exactly* the way they were." She gestured appropriately wide and high, standing on tiptoe.

Dan tended to discourage other people's illusions, though he cherished his own. "I don't think that would be very sensible," he told the child. "Or very American."

"Why not American?" Gretchen asked, with her oppositional, possibly aggrieved edge. If her parents hadn't divorced, her marriage might have held together; a bad precedent had been set.

"We move on, don't we?" he tactfully answered. "As a nation. We try to learn from our mistakes. Those towers were taller than they needed to be. The Arabs were right—they were a boast."

Hermione, barefoot, peeked out from the door leading into the library, but did not venture onto the dirty tiles. She admonished them, "Children shouldn't see what you're all looking at. It's scary."

"Don't be scared," her younger sister told her. "My teacher says the blue lights are like the rainbow. They mean it won't happen again." ■

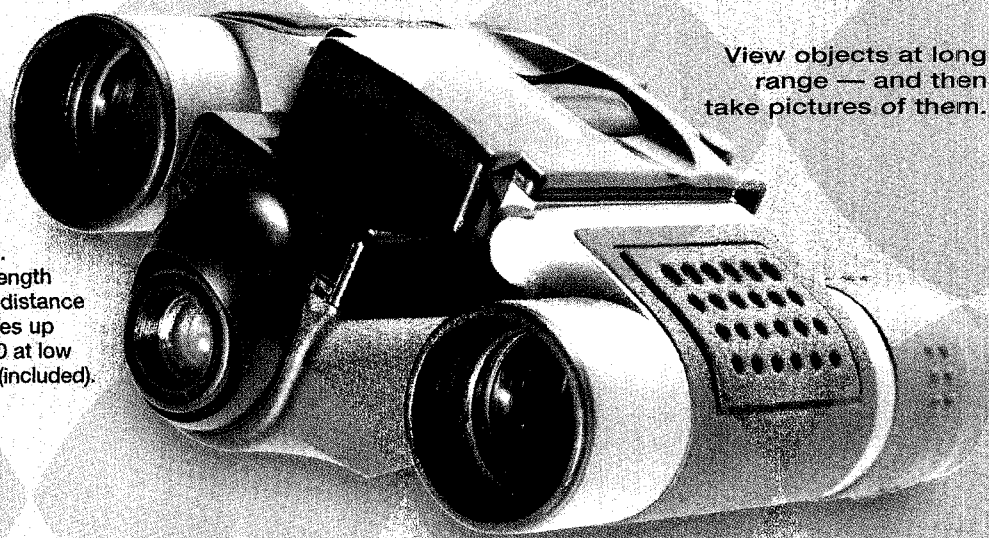
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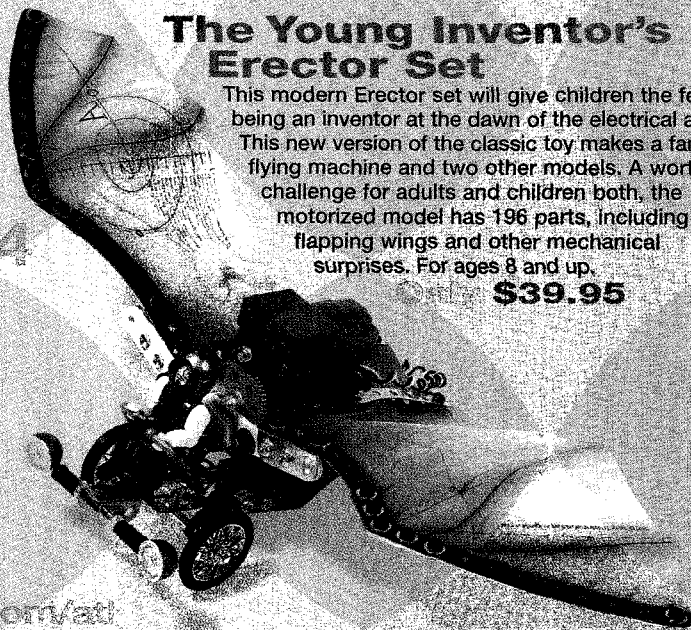
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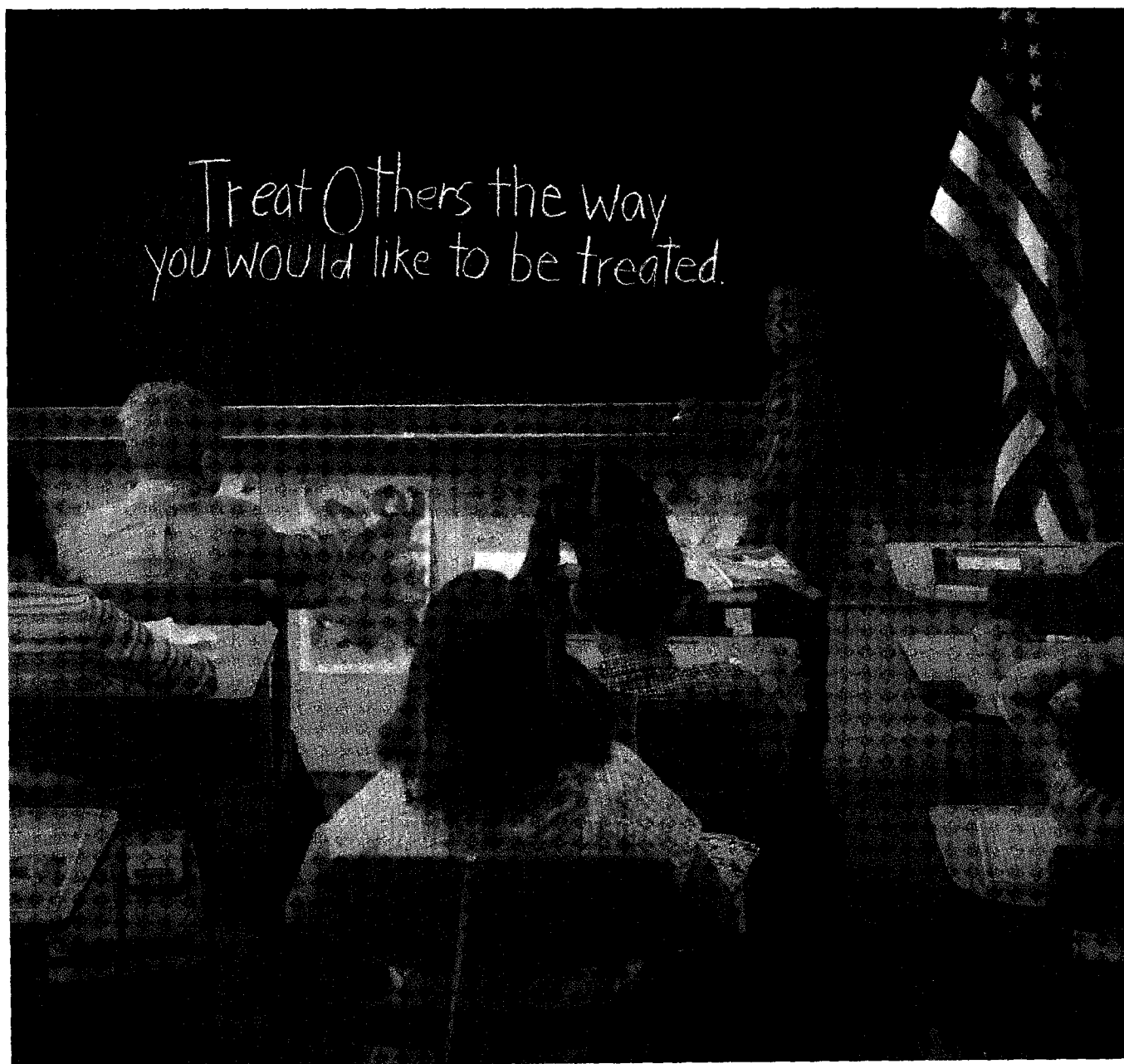
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Lehmann PAGE 127

"Our Saint, Our Umpire"

Thomas Mallon's appreciation of
the nonfiction works of his mentor
and friend Mary McCarthy, collected
in *A Bolt From the Blue and
Other Essays* PAGE 128

NEW & NOTEWORTHY

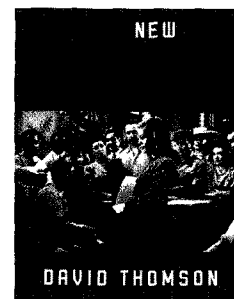
What to read this month

BY BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

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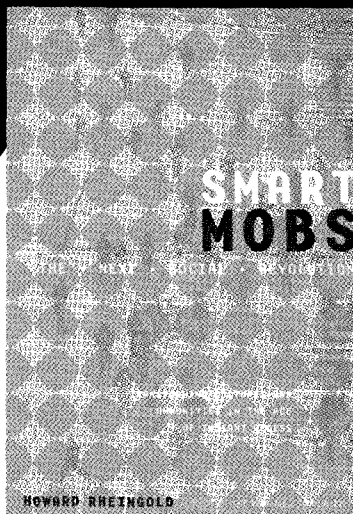
A reference book of extraordinary literary merit, this eccentric, audacious, sparkling work returns—revised, updated, and bulging with 300 new entries (including Rin Tin Tin and Graham Greene), which helps to account for its nearly 1,000 closely printed double-column pages. Probably the greatest living film critic and historian, Thomson, an Englishman who lives in San Francisco, writes the most fun and enthralling prose about the movies since Pauline Kael. His judgments in these pungent mini- and not-so-mini-essays can be exasperatingly wrong: He characterizes Mike Nichols's vacuous and pretentious wife Diane Sawyer as "lovely and smart"; how can he express any reservations about *Children of Paradise*? And although he's hardly an auteurist, his book focuses on directors at the expense of writers and producers.

But regarding the important issues Thomson is almost always dead-on: He champions the supreme genius of Howard Hawks, who captured better than any other filmmaker both "masculine romanticism" (in *Red River*) and "the dazzling battles of word, innuendo, glance, and gesture" between men and women (in *Twentieth Century*, *Bringing Up Baby*, *Only Angels Have Wings*, and, of course, *His Girl Friday*). He astutely observes that Agnes Moorehead figures in "the two most indelibly humane moments in the work of Orson Welles"—the scene in *Citizen Kane* in which Kane's mother opens the window "to call in her son from the snow so that he may advance on his destiny" and the scene in *The Magnificent Ambersons* in which "Aunt Fanny watches Georgie devouring her strawberry shortcake, pleased to be useful ... but knowing that he does not need her, deeply aware that her vibrant romantic hopes are growing shrill with neglect." He appreciates the often neglected Jean Arthur, prizing her "rare, querulous charm" and the "earnest, furious thought" she brought to comedy and romance. He knows that Cary Grant "was the best and most important actor in the history of the cinema"—and he even has the perspicacity to recognize as Grantlike the "wit, narrative speed, and good-natured ease" of the great TV show *The Rockford Files*. The book is a marvel.



THE NEW
BIOGRAPHICAL
DICTIONARY OF FILM
by David Thomson
Knopf

Beyond the virtual
community lies the
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society, I've learned to follow
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and fascinating implications
for all of us."

DAVID WEINBERGER, author
of *Small Pieces Loosely Joined*



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LITERARY STUDIES

ESSAYS, by George Orwell, edited by John Carey (Everyman). Buy this book. Unless, that is, you already have the four-volume *The Collected Essays, Journalism, and Letters*—available now only in paperback—or the twenty-volume *Complete Works*. (I own both, but I'm keeping this one for my desk.) Orwell's are the most important essays of the twentieth century, and reading them—along with his nonfiction books *The Road to Wigan Pier* and *Homage to Catalonia*—will make you a clearer thinker, a cleaner writer, and a more thoughtful human being. This handsome, 1,372-page hardcover volume contains his complete essays (even his unfinished piece on Evelyn Waugh, which is missing from the four-volume edition) and selected reviews and journalism. It also includes an incisive introduction by the brilliant John Carey, but lacks an index—a grievous fault, but its only one.

THE VICTORIANS: THE OXFORD ENGLISH LITERARY HISTORY, VOL. 8, 1830–1880, by Philip Davis (Oxford). Though its title suggests a dry and earnest tome full of summary lists ("Kingsley's other novels include *Hypatia*, *Westward Ho!*..."), this is an imaginative, penetrating, often idiosyncratic history, written with brio. Davis takes an expansive view of literature (in addition to examining the poetry, fiction, and drama of the period, he writes about books and essays on theology, science, biography, travel, criticism, history, and psychology); he addresses the relationship between literature and broad political and cultural trends; and he pays particular attention to what he calls the "conditions of literary production," such as the growth of the reading public and changes in the book trade. But by probing his abundant subject in what amount to selective and detailed critical essays (for instance, devoting the bulk of one of his three chapters on fiction to comparing the high realism of Trollope and George Eliot—who emerges from this account as the greatest literary genius of the age—to support his contention that "the novel offered the most subtle, diversified and complicated network of shifting interrelationships

available to human thinking"), Davis has written a book of breathtaking depth as well as breadth.

PUBLISHED AND PERISHED, edited by Steven Gilbar and Dean Stewart (David R. Codine). This wittily selected and atrociously titled anthology of remembrances of American writers by American writers reveals as much about the eulogists as about their subjects. In his treacherous commemorative pen portrait of F. Scott Fitzgerald, for example, John O'Hara couldn't transcend his propensity for envy and schadenfreude. Then again, Fitzgerald's memorial to the enormously kind but cynical Ring Lardner managed to be at once generous (Fitzgerald noted that as a writer Lardner "heard and recorded the voice of a continent," and that as a man "he always did every single thing he said he would do") and superciliously dismissive, if not wholly inaccurate, in its appraisal of Lardner's artistic merit. Of course, writers are a notoriously insecure and backbiting breed, so it's a delight to come across Willa Cather's sweet and sad recollection of the doomed young Stephen Crane; Booth Tarkington's brave encomium to the already out-of-fashion William Dean Howells; Saul Bellow's trenchant appreciation of the enormous differences between him and John Cheever, which endeared them to each other; and H. L. Mencken's rollicking and loving account of his first meeting with James Gibbons Huneker—a pilsner-marinated lunch at which Huneker delivered a five-hour monologue on subjects ranging from "the defects in the structure of *Sister Carrie*" to "what George Moore said about German bathrooms" to the causes of Tchaikovsky's suicide (the talk "was chaos made to gleam and coruscate with every device of the seven arts").

MAX BEERBOHM, by N. John Hall (Yale). Hall's book has many strengths and some annoying—because they are so avoidable—defects. Too many literary biographers exhaustively chronicle their subject's every journey and meal while failing to probe the relationship between the writer's life and his work.

In contrast, this short, highly intelligent literary portrait incisively appraises Beerbohm's personality, writings, and relationships with, among others, Algernon Charles Swinburne, Oscar Wilde, Henry James, and Virginia Woolf. But it's marred by a self-conscious style that Hall describes as "quirky" (must he refer to his long-dead subject as "Max"?).

HISTORY

THE GI WAR AGAINST JAPAN, by *Peter Schrijvers* (New York University). This terrifying, remarkable work examines the attitudes, perceptions, and behavior of U.S. fighting men in the Pacific theater during World War II. Imaginatively drawing on letters, diaries, memoirs, military reports, and contemporary psychological assessments, Schrijvers reveals the social, historical, and emotional roots of the peculiarly frenzied and merciless war that Americans fought in what they regarded as an exotic and impenetrable paradise—a conflict that escalated into a campaign of extermination, and a war against the land and nature itself. Schrijvers's sober account of Americans' wartime rage, which manifested itself in wholesale rape and the indiscriminate killing of civilians, is far from a work of crude revisionism—he reminds us of the abysmal conduct of the Japanese, and he refreshingly and correctly views the dropping of the atomic bomb as a continuation of the methods used by all the combatants. Nevertheless, this temperate study of murderous fury is among the most unsettling books I've read in years.

NATASHA'S DANCE, by *Orlando Figes* (Metropolitan Books). Figes is among the plethora of young, bold, and brilliant British historians who write with authority and verve. His first book, *A People's Tragedy*, is the finest history of the Russian Revolution in the English language. This, his second, is a stunning and ambitious cultural history of Russia. Its thematic chapters examine such subjects as art, customs, folklore, religion, cuisine, education, and—most important—the works of novelists, poets, composers, historians, philosophers, and choreographers. Figes captures nothing

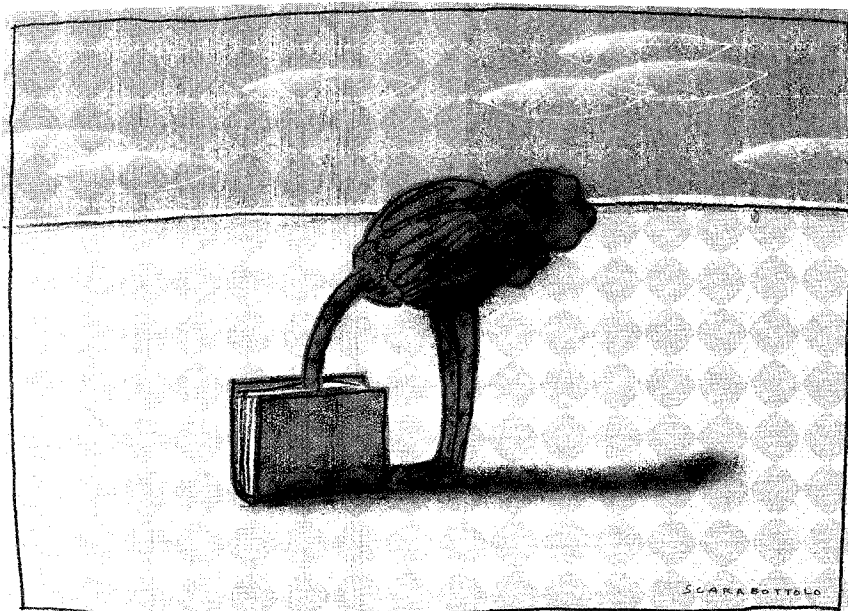
less than Russians' complex and protean notions regarding their national identity, and their tortured and not infrequently violent efforts to define and determine it.

THE WORLD OF ODYSSEUS, by *M. I. Finley* (New York Review Books). A scintillating work of literary and historical sociology, this book, originally published in 1954 and last revised in 1977, is back in print. In five tightly and elegantly argued chapters Finley uses the Homeric poems and the always conflicting and sparse archaeological evidence to speculate about and shed light on the world of Greece in the tenth and ninth centuries B.C. His topics range from agriculture to gift-giving, but his approach is mainly psychological and anthropological—he focuses on this intensely alien culture's conceptions of justice, morality, kinship, love, and power, and its attitudes toward sexuality, violence, and death. His book and E. R. Dodds's *The Greeks and the Irrational* remain the smartest and most dazzling works on ancient Greece that are accessible to the layman.

THE GREAT CATASTROPHE OF MY LIFE, by *Thomas E. Buckley, S.J.* (North Carolina). Buckley's examination of divorce in antebellum Virginia elucidates a complex, antiquated legal and legislative procedure and exposes southern attitudes toward a host of subjects—

including marriage, sex, family life, and domestic violence. What makes the book of more than scholarly interest, however, is the author's sensitive and detailed recounting of the anguish that often prompted and always accompanied the efforts to dissolve marital bonds.

IN THE DEVIL'S SNARE, by *Mary Beth Norton* (Knopf). Here is yet another book about the 1692 Salem witchcraft trials. Historians are drawn to this subject in part because it defies explanation. Their attempts to make sense of it are often anachronistic and usually overly speculative: they've attributed the crisis to the psychosexual imagination of teenage girls, to status anxiety, to collective hysteria, to misogyny, to religious fervor, even to organic hallucinogens. Norton continues in this tradition. In a slightly self-important tone, she links the crisis to the bloody and, from the point of view of the Massachusetts colonists, disastrous war against the French and the Indians on the north-eastern frontier. That war, Norton avers, contributed to the sense of panic, and the colonists saw it and the outbreak of witchcraft as divine punishment for their sins. But her logic leaps when she concludes that had the war "been avoided, the ... [witchcraft] crisis would not have occurred." And she's on even shakier ground when she conflates fanciful motive with evidence, asserting that the judges—as leaders of the



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colony who had bungled the war—"needed" to believe the witchcraft charges, because "if God had providentially caused the wartime disasters and he had also unleashed the devil on Massachusetts, then they bore no responsibility for the current state of affairs." Norton's own case would be thrown out of court.

MRS. ASTOR'S NEW YORK, by Eric Homberger (Yale). Homberger probes the values, familial interconnections, clubs, neighborhoods, houses, social rituals, and resorts of nineteenth-century New York's aristocracy. As lively and lucidly written as Cleveland Amory's and Stephen Birmingham's portraits of the rich and well-born, this book is more penetrating, thanks to Homberger's rigorous scholarship. Readers may want to pair it with David C. Hammack's analytical history *Power and Society: Greater New York at the Turn of the Century*—or, of course, with Edith Wharton's novels.

KEEPING UP WITH THE JONESES: ENVY IN AMERICAN CONSUMER SOCIETY, 1890–1930, by Susan J. Matt (Pennsylvania). Matt's unusually accessible study builds on the enormous body of recent scholarship that has examined America's transformation into a consumer culture in the first three decades of the twentieth century. Whereas most such works have concentrated on demographic, economic, manufacturing, and—most important—marketing changes, Matt recognizes that a consumer economy depends above all on a profound shift in values. She insightfully details the ways in which advertisers encouraged potential consumers to embrace envy (an emotion that had traditionally been castigated), but she fails to assess the complex ways in which a consumer economy not only relies on but produces that redefinition of standards: such an economy, perforce, makes individual choice the highest good, and the radical individualism it engenders corrodes traditional values and social relations. Still, Matt shows the vital link between a consumer economy and the twin convictions that life's chief object is personal happiness and

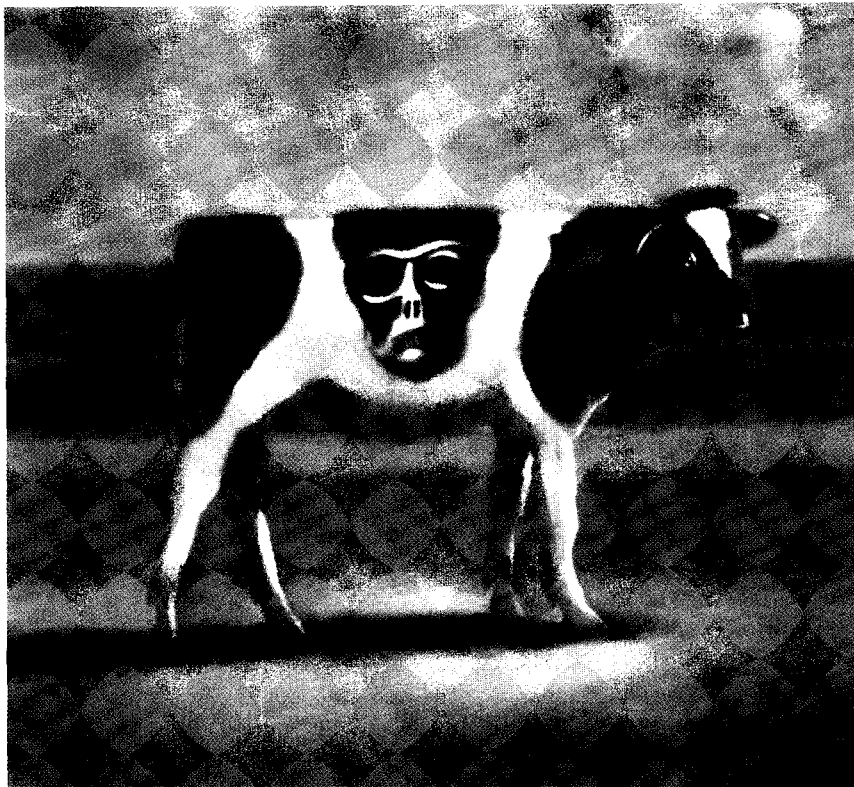
that consumers "can turn themselves into who they long to be" by getting and spending. And in doing so, she illuminates an unresolved contradiction at the heart of modern capitalism: the very values it produces are at war with the values—industry, sobriety, moderation, self-discipline, and avoidance of debt—that built it and that are necessary for its long-term survival.

CURRENT AFFAIRS

SPY, by David Wise (Random House). This is the best of the now six major books published in the past year on the Robert Hanssen spy case, but that's not saying much. Wise, perhaps the foremost writer on espionage, had access to more sources (including Hanssen's psychiatrist) than did the other authors, and he clarifies some secondary matters (such as how the FBI recruited the KGB officer who betrayed Hanssen). But he, like the other authors, writes in a flabby journalese. And although all the books recount the story with a degree of detail that borders on the prurient, they all fail to illuminate most of its important issues—which isn't surprising, given that it involves highly classified information as well as the dark inner life of a profoundly unhappy, secretive, and unsavory man.

THE MAN WHO TALKS TO DOGS, by Melinda Roth (St. Martin's Press). Roth's is really two books: a touching if not terribly insightful portrait of a young man who has devoted his life to rescuing the street dogs of St. Louis, and a harrowing report on the plight of the millions of abandoned and stray dogs throughout the United States. As Roth demonstrates, their lives (and those of stray cats) are rendered short, painful, and terror-filled, because their subspecies has been bred for thousands of years to be dependent on man's protection and kindness—"they are not mentally or physically designed to be on their own." These dogs are—literally—our creatures, and their heartbreaking condition testifies to humanity's obduracy and, all too often, its sadism. **A**

Benjamin Schwarz is the literary editor of The Atlantic.



BOOKS

POLITICAL ANIMALS

A new book asks all the right questions about animal rights, even if it doesn't canvass all the possible answers

BY CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

.....

There is a certain culture of humor in the speechwriting division of the Bush Administration—a culture that involves a mild form of hazing. For example, David Frum, the Canadian Jewish neo-conservative who helped to originate the phrase “axis of evil,” was tasked with writing the welcoming address for the first White House Ramadan dinner. And last Thanksgiving, when the jokey annual ritual of the presidential turkey pardon came rolling around with the same mirthless inevitability as Groundhog Day, the job of penning the words of executive clemency on the eve of mass turkey slaughter was given to Matthew Scully, the only principled vegetarian on the team. Scully is a Roman Catholic, a former editor at *National Review*, and, I should add, a friendly Washington

acquaintance of mine. He left his job in the executive mansion to forward this passionate piece of advocacy. Who can speak for the dumb? A man who has had to answer this question on behalf of the President himself is now stepping forward on behalf of the truly voiceless.

As the title suggests, Scully takes Genesis 1: 24–26 as his point of departure. In that celebrated passage God awards “dominion” to man over all the fish, fowl, and beasts. As if to show that human beings are not, after all, much more reflective

than brutes, Scully adopts the tone of a biblical literalist and wastes great swaths of paper in wrestling with the hermeneutics of this. A moment’s thought will suffice to show that any pleader for animals who adopts such a line has made a rod for his own back. First, the words of Genesis are unam-

biguous in placing lesser creatures at our mercy and at our disposal. Second, the crucial verses do not mention the marvelous creation of dinosaurs and pterodactyls, either because the semiliterate scribes who gathered the story together were unaware of these prodigies of design or because (shall I hint?) the Creator was unaware of having made them. The magnificence of the marsupials is likewise omitted. Even more to the point, although “everything creeping that creepeth upon the earth” is cited in general, God does not explicitly seek the credit for rats, flies, cockroaches, and mosquitoes. Most important of all, there is no mention of the mind-warping variety and beauty and complexity of the micro-organisms. Again, either the scribes didn’t know about viruses and bacteria, or the Creator didn’t appreciate with how lavish a hand he had unleashed life on the only planet in his solar system that can manage to support it.

The latter point is, I think, a telling one for another reason, which is that for many generations the human species did not at all have “dominion” over other life forms. The germs had dominion over us. And so, until the advantage was slowly wrested from them, did creatures such as locusts. Today ticks still rule over immense tracts of the terrestrial globe, and microbes rule absolutely. Even the Christian image of the shepherd, which reduces the believer to a member of a flock, conveys the idea of guarding a human-organized and quasi-domesticated system from animal predators. And that, in turn, reminds us that the shepherd protects the sheep and the lambs not for their own good but the better to fleece and then to slay them.

The only reason I can imagine for Scully’s risking damage to his own argument in this way is that he feels a need to challenge the chilly eminence of Peter Singer in the field of animal rights. Professor Singer was the intellectual pioneer here, and receives generous if awkward notice in these pages, yet he is a strict materialist and regards human life as essentially, and without differentiation, mammalian. His views on the unborn—and, indeed, the born—must cause infinite distress to a man of



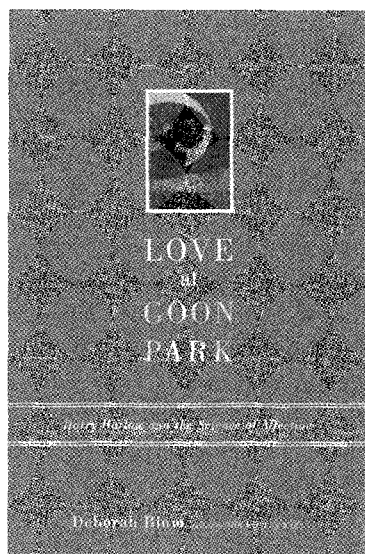
**DOMINION:
THE POWER OF MAN,
THE SUFFERING OF
ANIMALS, AND THE
CALL TO MERCY**

by Matthew Scully
St. Martin's Press

ERIC DINYER/GRAPHISTOCK

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Catholic sensibility. I can imagine that Singer would agree with me on a second-order point, which is that concern with the suffering and exploitation of animals can be expected to arise only in a fairly advanced and complex society where human beings are thoroughly in charge, and where they no longer need fear daily challenges from other species. (Or in societies under the sway of a greatly simplified unworld view like that of the Jains or some Hindus, in which it is prohibited for spiritual reasons to separate the body and soul of an ant or a flea.)

Our near absolute dominion over nature has, however, confronted us with one brilliant and ironic and inescapable insight. The decryption of DNA is not only useful in putting a merciful but overdue end to theories of creationism and racism but also enlightening in instructing us that we are ourselves ani-

only when it ceases. We observe that animals, although they may respect one another's territory, do not at all respect one another's "rights"—unless those other animals happen to be human, in which case mutual-interest bargains can often be struck, and both sides can be brought to an agreement that neither will eat the other. We notice that creationism often entails "dispensationalism"—the demented belief that there is no point in preserving nature, because the Deity will soon replace it with a perfected form. This popular teleology does not just dispense with creatures and plants: it condemns human beings to an eternity of either torment or—what may well be worse—praise and jubilation.

The three critical areas of real-world debate are the human uses of animals for food, for sport, and for experiment. All these uses have now reached

Concern with the suffering and exploitation of animals can be expected to arise only in a society where human beings are thoroughly in charge, and no longer need fear daily challenges from other species.

mals. We share chromosomal material, often to a striking degree of overlap, not just with the higher primates but with quite humble life forms. Among those scholars who ridicule the claim of "animal rights," the irreplaceable propaganda keyword is "anthropomorphism"—that laughable combination of heresy and fallacy that uses human structure and human response for analogy. In fact the laugh is at the expense of those who deploy the word. The morphology of the anthropos is itself animalistic. This is a much better starting point than the burlblings of Bronze Age Palestine and Mesopotamia, because it permits us to see fellow creatures as just that, and because it allows us to trace our filiations and solidarities with them, as well as our conflicts of interest.

When we look more closely, we see that cats do not in fact torture their mice (only an "anthropomorphist" could make such a self-incriminating transference) but, rather, are fascinated by rapid movement and lose interest

the point where they would be bound to arouse alarm even in a meat-eating, sport-loving person who was hoping for a particular medicine or organ graft that required extensive laboratory testing. I said earlier that such alarm could arise only when society had reached a certain plane of detachment from raw "nature." But even in times when the idea of "rights" for beasts would have been inexpressible, many people had a conscience about the mistreatment of animals, a reverence for their dignity and sometimes their majesty, and a decent respect for the reciprocal value of good relations with them. No body of human mythology or folklore is without this element, even if it is only the ballad or epic of an exceptional war-horse or hunting dog. The prophet Muhammad cut away the sleeve of his robe rather than disturb a slumbering cat (and how Scully, who does not mention this episode, wishes that Jesus of Nazareth had by word or gesture admonished his followers to respect animals). William

Blake could experience the agonies of animals almost as if they were his own. Saint Francis of Assisi may have been something of a freak, but those who heard him knew that he was employing one of the registers of human sensitivity. Animals, to make an obvious point, have been given names for at least as long as we have records. Even when this relationship was sinister or excessive or hysterical, as in ancient cults that worshipped crocodiles or bears, it shows that human awareness of a certain kinship pre-dates our genetic mapping of it. If we call this "instinct," it is only a further acknowledgment of the same thing.

Thus when I read of the possible annihilation of the elephant or the whale, or the pouring of oven cleaner or cosmetics into the eyes of live kittens, or the close confinement of pigs and calves in lightless pens, I feel myself confronted by human stupidity, which I recognize as an enemy. This would be so even if I didn't much care about the subjective experience of the animals themselves. For example, although I find that I can't read Peter Singer for long without becoming dulled by his robotic utilitarianism, the parts of his famous book *Animal Liberation* that I find most impressive are the deadpan reprints of animal-experiment "reports," written by white-coated dolts or possibly white-coated sadists. (The connection between stupidity and cruelty is a close one.) If you subject this chimp or this dog to these given experiences, of shock or mutilation or sensory deprivation, it will exhibit just the responses any fool could have predicted. No claim of usefulness or human application is made; only requests for further funding. Such awful pointlessness and callousness had, I thought, been set back a bit by Singer and others—and so it has. But *Dominion* is replete with examples of pseudo-scientists who still maintain that animals cannot feel pain, let alone agony. (By "agony" I mean pain accompanied by fear—protracted, repeated anguish and misery.)

The dumb academics who mouth this stuff are legatees, whether they know it or not, of René Descartes, who held that animals were machines and that

The Pleasures of SLOW FOOD

by Corby Kummer



In a world increasingly dominated by fast food, *The Pleasures of Slow Food* celebrates heritage recipes, artisan traditions, and the rapid evolution of a movement to make good food a part of everyday life. Slow Food is defined by how it's made: if it's allowed to ripen before it's harvested, prepared by hand and enjoyed among friends it's Slow Food.

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GLASS

A WORLD HISTORY

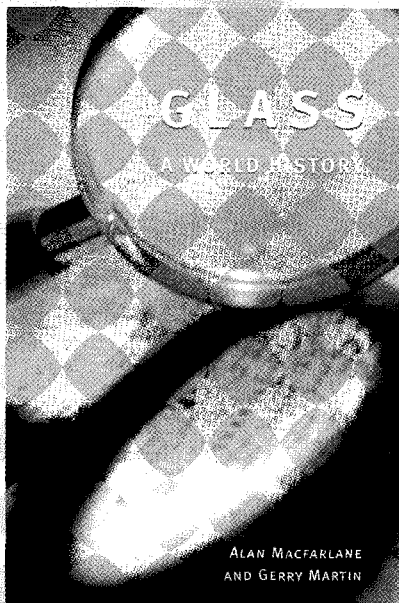
ALAN MACFARLANE AND GERRY MARTIN

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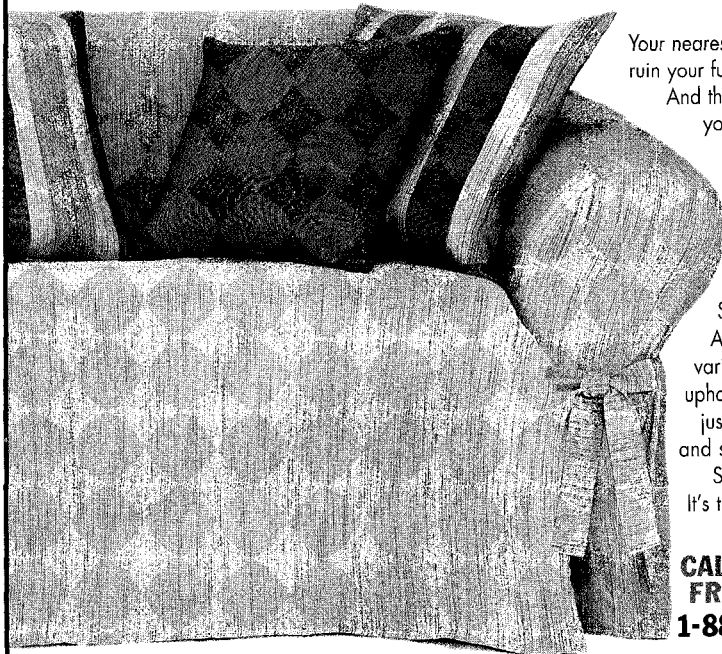


their yelps or cries were the noises emitted by broken machinery. One doesn't require much conceptual apparatus to refute this, and Scully is, I think, taking its current advocates too seriously. The morons who torture animals would obviously not get the same thrill from battering a toaster. Children, who are almost always en rapport with animals, do not treat them as toys. (And maltreatment of animals by a child is a famously strong indicator, as our investigators of psychopathology have found, of hideous future conduct. Hogarth intuited this centuries ago, in his sequence of illustrations *The Four Stages of Cruelty*.) The many old or lonely or infirm people who find therapeutic value in animal companionship do not get the same result even from a semi-animate object such as a TV.

Sentimental stuff may have been written about animals' having personalities, but it can easily be shown that they are able to distinguish human individuals almost as readily as human beings can distinguish one another. And great repertoires of learned or taught behavior among animals are only renamed if we decide to be minimalist and call them "conditioned reflexes." Finally, and to deploy an inelegant piece of evidence that is not even hinted at by Scully, who, unlike Singer, entirely shirks the subject of interspecies intimacy, I would point out that many human beings have found consolation in sexual intercourse with animals (for instance, the prototype of Robinson Crusoe)—and who will say that this cannot lead to the sort of love that would be wasted on a car, or a lawn mower?

This would leave us and the "machinists" with only the problem of language and cognition. The whale, we are in effect informed, has its cortex but is too non-sentient to know, say, that it is an endangered species. The great apes who learn to sign whole phrases to their human friends are just improving their food-acquisition skills. Dolphins can at best (at best!) talk only to one another. To all such assertions the correct response requires no strong proof of language or logic in nonhuman brains. It is enough to know that we do not know enough. All the advances in the

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study of animal sentience have been made extremely recently, and some of these findings are fascinating and promising. If you insist, these same studies may even have benefits for human beings. Ordinary prudence, or straight utilitarianism, would therefore suggest that this is a bad time for us to be destroying whales for their blubber, or elephants for their tusks (or for mere "recreation"), or Rwandan gorillas in order to make their prehensile paws into ashtrays. "The end of natural history" was the arresting phrase used by Douglas Chadwick to describe this bleak state of affairs; one might suggest to the debased Cartesians that they conduct a thought experiment involving likely human response to a planet populated only by other human beings and their pets and farm animals, plus the lesser birds, reptiles, and insects. Oh, dear—I said "populated."

Opponents of the careful attitude toward animals also have their "extreme scenario" tactics. Probably no group except the pacifists is the butt of as much taunting about inconsistency as the pro-animal faction. You don't eat meat but—aha!—you do wear leather shoes. Scully shows a martyrlike patience in the face of this, as befits a man who's had to hear innumerable jests about veal and spotted owls at carnivorous Republican fundraisers. Joy Williams, in *Ill Nature*, has a more mordant reply: "The animal people are vegetarians. They'd better be if they don't want to be accused of being hypocritical. Of course, by being unhypocritical, they can be accused of being self-righteous." But it must be noted that there are so-called "deep ecologists," who materialize all the expectations of the cynics and who stoutly hold that there is no ethical difference between a human baby and a gerbil. Why must it be noted? First, because it is not the only symptom of a reactionary Malthusianism on the green fringe, and second, because arguments like this are taken up by defenders of the status quo and mobilized for dialectical purposes. The gerbil-baby equivalence is one of the very few human delusions for which there is no scriptural warrant; and for all I know, in the context of inter-

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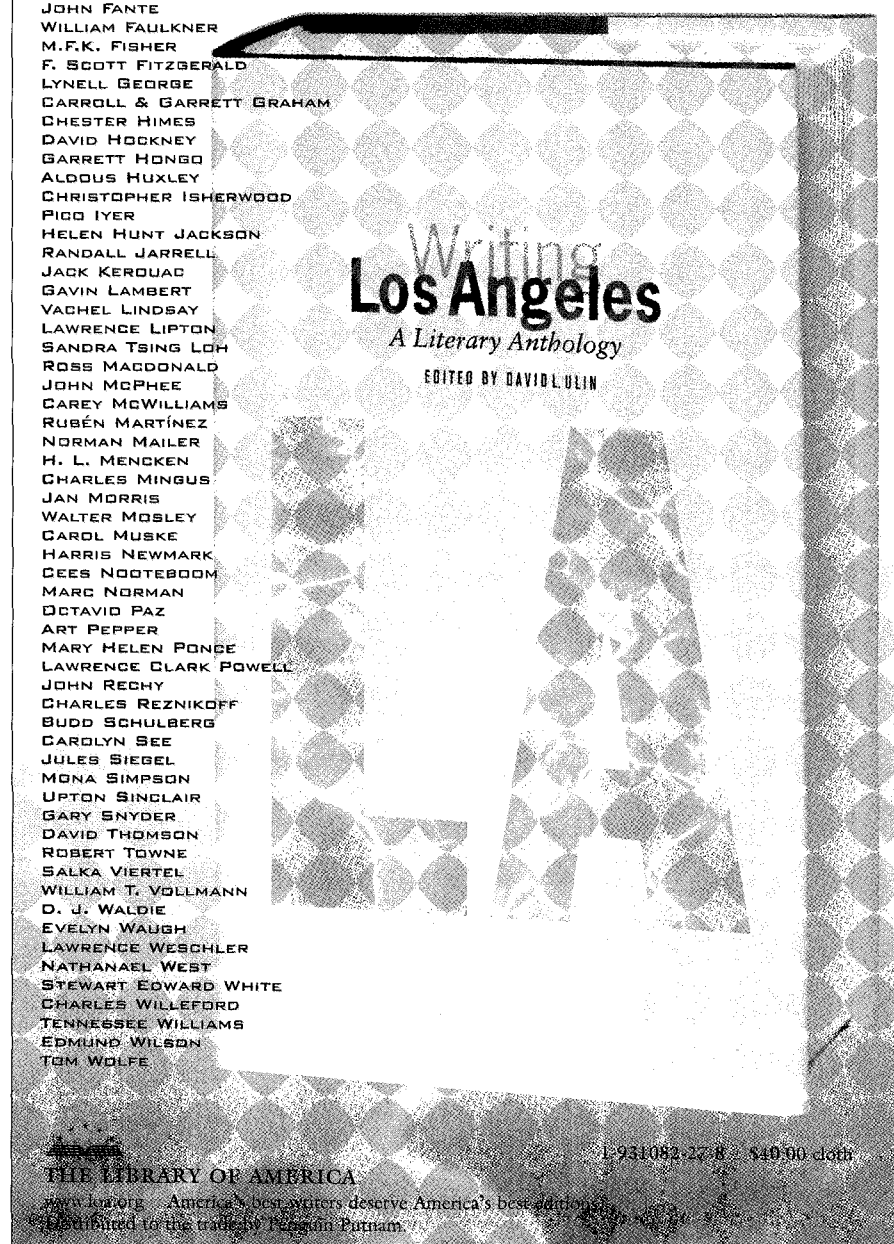
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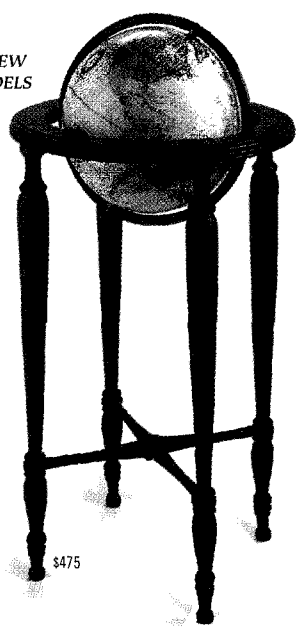
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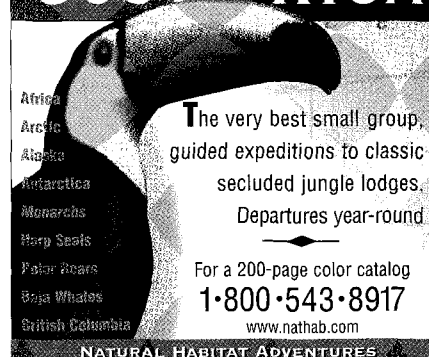
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stellar time and galactic indifference, it may be valid. There are sound reasons for concluding that all life is ultimately random. But there is no way of living and acting as if this is true; and if it is true, human beings cannot very well be condemned for making the best of things by taking advantage of other animals.

Like all casuistry and all dogmatism, this sort of stuff contains its own negation. But more interesting, and perhaps more encouraging, it also contains the germ of a complement. Just as those who experiment on animals are eager to deny that they are cruel (why, in point of their own theory, do they bother?), and just as the proprietors of factory farms maintain that the beasts are better off than they would be on the hillside, and just as some particularly fatuous Englishmen assert that the fox "really" enjoys being hunted, so the animal-liberation fanatics use human life and human rights as their benchmark. What the Skinnerian behaviorists say about animals would, if true, largely hold good for people, and those who endow fleas with human rights are halfway toward ridiculing their own definition of human beings as a "plague species." Loud, overconfident dismissals of obvious qualms betray the stirrings of an uneasy conscience. Neither side can break free of an inchoate but essential notion of our interdependence.

Scully is at his best when he stops wrangling with Aquinas and other Church fathers (I notice that if he wonders about animal souls, he keeps his concern to himself) and goes out into the field. With an almost masochistic resolve, he exposes himself to the theory and practice of exploitation as it is found among the exponents of commercial hunting and industrial farming. The arguments he hears, about gutsy individualism in the first case and rationalized profit maximization in the second, are the disconcerting sounds of his own politics being played back to him. Making the finest use of this tension, he produces two marvelous passages of reporting. Without condescension but with a fine contempt he introduces us to "canned hunting": the can't-miss virtual safaris that charge a fortune to fly

bored and overweight Americans to Africa and "big game" destinations on other continents for an air-conditioned trophy trip and the chance to butcher a charismatic animal in conditions of guaranteed safety. Those who can't afford the whole package can sometimes shell out to shoot a rare wild creature that would otherwise be pensioned off from an American zoo.

Millions of animals, either semi-wild or semi-domestic, would never have been born if not for human design. Pheasants and deer are bred or preserved in profusion for sport and for food, and the famous British fox is, or was until recent parliamentary challenges, protected by horse-borne huntsmen from those who would otherwise have shot or poisoned it out of hand. Traditional farming, for which Scully evinces much nostalgia, is a logical extension of this—and factory farming seems to most people no more than a further extension and modernization of the idea that civilization and animal husbandry are inextricable. However, Scully's second graphic account, of his visit to a pig plant in North Carolina, is a frontal challenge to such facile progressivism. In page after relentless page he shows that the horrible confinement of these smart and resourceful creatures, and the endless attempt to fatten and pacify them with hormones, laxatives, antibiotics, and swirls of rendered pigs recycled into their own swill (and then to use other treatments to counterweigh the unintended consequences of the original ones), are far worse than we had suspected. A sort of Gresham's law means that more equals worse. The pigs develop hideous tumors and lesions; their litters are prone to stillbirths and malformations; their "stress levels" (another accidental revelation of the despised "anthropomorphic") are bewildering and annoying even to their keepers. Hardened migrant laborers who really need the work are frequently revolted by the slaughtering process. And, perhaps direst of all from the corporate viewpoint, the resulting meat is rank. "Pink," "spongy," and "exudative" are among the tasty terms used in internal company documents to describe the "pork" that is being prepared for

our delectation. When was the last time you peeled open a deli ham sandwich, or a BLT, to take a look at the color, let alone the consistency, of what you were being sold and were about to ingest? The ham doesn't taste of anything, but upon reflection this comes as a distinct relief.

Thus in the three arenas—food, sport, and experiment—Scully asks the right questions even if he doesn't canvass all the possible answers. When he is on form, he does this in beautiful and witty prose. I think he falls down on the optional fourth issue, the question of whether we lower our own moral threshold by deafening ourselves to animal bleats and roars and trumpetings. It is obviously tempting to think so, and the example of disturbed, animal-torturing children is a powerful one; but both he and Singer are unpersuasive on

Whereas those who love hamburgers and riskless hunting and mink coats are not in the front ranks of Amnesty International. Like the quality of mercy, the prompting of compassion is not finite, and can be self-replenishing.

Taking myself as averagely cynical, I came to discern while reading *Dominion* that in all the cases where animal suffering disturbed me, it was largely because of rationalist humanism. When my turn comes to get a heart valve or a kidney from a pig (and how is that for anthropomorphism, by the by?), I don't want the pig to have been rotting and wretched, let alone cannibalistic or subjected to promiscuous mutations, while it was alive. Much animal experimentation is a wasteful perversion of science (Jonas Salk's vaccine seemed useless when tested on anything but a human being). The elimination of elephants and whales and tigers and other highly

It will be found that people who “care”—about rain forests or animals, miscarriages of justice or dictatorships—are, though frequently irritating, very often the same people. The prompting of compassion is not finite.

this point. (Perhaps Singer has a folk memory of his fellow Australians' being forcibly employed in a historic theater of generalized cruelty.) Farmers, despite the rough jobs they have to perform with beasts, have not been more brutal, or brutalized, than those who work only with—or for—machines. The National Socialists in Germany enacted thoroughgoing legislation for the protection of animals and affected to regard Jewish ritual slaughter with abhorrence, meanwhile being enthusiastic about the ritual slaughter of Jews. Hindu nationalists are infinitely more tender toward cows than toward Muslims. As a species we can evidently live with a good deal of contradiction in this sphere. Conversely, one of the most idiotic jeers against animal lovers is the one about their preferring critters to people. As a matter of observation, it will be found that people who “care”—about rain forests or animals, miscarriages of justice or dictatorships—are, though frequently irritating, very often the same people.

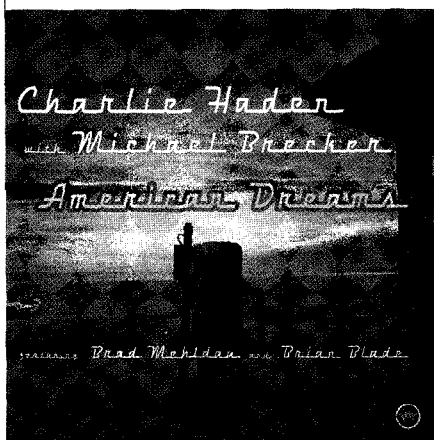
evolved animals would be impoverishing for us, and the disappearance of apes would be something like fratricide. The feeding of animal matter to protein-producing herds has been a catastrophe, resulting not only in ghastly pyres but in repulsive and sometimes lethally tainted food. The self-evidence of much of this has been obscured more than clarified by talk of “rights,” which in the case of non-bipeds does seem to meet Bentham's definition of “nonsense upon stilts.” Rights have to be asserted. Animals cannot make such assertions. We have to make representations to ourselves on their behalf. To the extent that we see our own interest in doing so, we unpick both the tautology that hobbles the utilitarian and the idealist delusion that surrounds the religious, and may simply become more “humane”—a word that seems to require its final vowel as never before. ■

Christopher Hitchens is a columnist for Vanity Fair and The Nation. His book Why Orwell Matters will be published this month.

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BOOKS

A SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY MODERN

Samuel Pepys did not, in fact, tell us everything

BY PHILIP HENSHER

.....

On October 24, 1662, a man sat down to dinner in his house in London with his wife. They were in a very good mood; that morning the man had found it hard to get out of bed to go to work, and the two of them had indulged in a good long lecherous dawdle between the sheets, dozing, pawing, and lazily romping. It was a Friday, and our Londoner turned up at the office late and shouted at his subordinates about their book-keeping. By midafternoon he was putting himself outside a gigantic dinner; it was an odd sort of dish he was eating, a stew of tripe with mustard, but he was enjoying it a great deal. Maybe it wasn't really all that delicious, but it was exactly the same

dish that he had recently eaten at a very grand dinner party. So they ate the lot.

Dinners were eaten all across the world on October 24, 1662, but it is fair to say that only the Recording Angel knows, or could ever know, about more than half a dozen of them. This dinner we do know about: we know what they ate, why they ate it, why they enjoyed it, why they were in a good mood with each other. And we happen to know lots of other things about the circumstances in which they sat and ate tripe: how much money they had at that moment, what their house looked like, how good their health was. Not one of these circumstances could be considered important in

any obvious way; each has the quality, instead, of being interesting, which is much stranger and much harder to achieve. We know about the socially aspiring dish of tripe and the randy morning because the man wrote it all down.

Commentators on Samuel Pepys always ask why he suddenly abandoned his *Diary* in 1669, but the much bigger question is this: Why did he begin it? Why, for nearly ten years, did he record, in rich detail, the circumstances and the events of his life? On the surface there is an explanation. The *Diary* begins at a time in English history that was obviously of great moment: Cromwell's Commonwealth was collapsing and the exiled King Charles II was preparing to return. Pepys was close to the center of events, and in a position to observe the players in an extraordinary drama; in the years to follow he became a figure of considerable power and authority. To that extent his contemporaries would have understood exactly why he should set down a record of events.

It is important to remember, however, that the seventeenth and, indeed,

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by Claire Tomalin
Knopf

THE DIARY OF SAMUEL PEPYS

edited by Robert Latham
and William Matthews
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JACK UNRUH

the eighteenth century knew absolutely nothing of Pepys's *Diary*. Written in shorthand, none of which was deciphered until the beginning of the nineteenth century, it was not published in full until after World War II. (*The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, edited by Robert Latham and William Matthews, is the best edition now available.) The *Diary* would in fact almost certainly have baffled Pepys's contemporaries; there is no precedent and no parallel for what Pepys actually did. Others did something superficially similar; among works that are still read, perhaps the closest are the court memoirs of Lord Hervey and those of Saint-Simon. Like Pepys, these men found themselves in a position to observe powerful figures intimately; also like Pepys, both were driven by an urge to expose the failures and weaknesses they saw in princes. But there the resemblance stops. Saint-Simon and Hervey automatically referred to themselves in the third person, and it wouldn't have occurred to either of them to tell us what he had for dinner. They wrote decades after Pepys, but they could never have understood what Pepys was doing.

Pepys didn't explain his purpose, and perhaps he, too, found his urge inexplicable. If, like Saint-Simon's detailed journal of the last years of Louis XIV's court and the Regency, the *Diary* is in part a romance of public life, the great bulk of it, and its greatest appeal, is on the tripe-and-mustard level. The oddest fact about the *Diary* becomes apparent when one sets it not against other journals of historical record but against journals that explore the self, whether in this period or subsequently: Pepys wrote a great deal about himself, as many of his contemporaries wrote about themselves, privately or publicly; but his considerations and dramatizations of his consciousness and behavior have almost no spiritual or mystical aspect. Even John Evelyn's diary, which is very engaging, never escapes from the temptation to moralize. Religious questions, one feels, became urgent for Pepys only when they took on a political or a social significance—as perhaps they did when his enemies in the House of Commons started calling him a practicing Roman Catholic.

Pepys was pretty well the only writer at this time who demonstrated that there was such a thing as a secular, worldly way to interrogate an individual life and an individual character; the difference between the self-analysis in Pepys and that in, say, the *Religio Medici* of Sir Thomas Browne is huge. To come to Pepys after laboriously assembling an appreciation for Browne is to have the sensation of coming out of a ramshackle and dusty provincial museum into a brilliantly sunlit and crowded street.

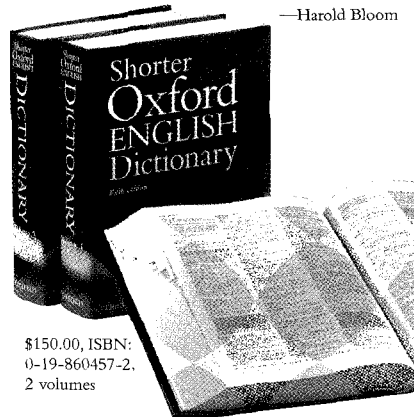
The biggest oddity in Pepys, and the real core of his undying fascination, is something one doesn't pretend to be able to explain. He wrote endlessly about himself, about his life, about his house and his friends and his ambitions. He examined himself, and he reported exactly what he had done each day, even if he had only eaten some tripe or seen a play. (The reader should know that in exploring that particular day in October of 1662 I took a passage completely at random. Pepys was interested in everything, and everything in the *Diary* is interesting.) One concludes that he was deeply absorbed by his own life and character; but the *Diary* is the opposite of solipsistic. Set it next to Boswell's journals, or Benjamin Haydon's, and the difference is immediately apparent. Pepys seems to have been focused primarily on the world, the external circumstances of his society, and in the *Diary* the "I" strikes us as a character like any other. Just as in *Gulliver's Travels*, or Defoe, or Dickens, or Proust, no special privilege or indulgence is permitted to the wielder of the first person singular; we feel that Pepys watched himself quite neutrally.

To our eyes, London in 1660 would seem a little city. Its western edge was marked by Goring House, where Buckingham Palace is now; building stopped short of modern-day Oxford Street to the north, and London had yet to expand substantially south of the Thames. The Tower of London was the easternmost point. The society of this little city had a kind of unity and, despite a rigid caste system, an intimacy; royalty and the upper aristocracy were conspicuous presences. The minute and insignificant

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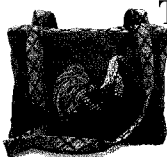
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details, the relaxed and unimpressed way in which he unflinchingly recorded the foibles and mannerisms and the wanderings in and out of the greatest of men, somehow combine to give an accurate impression of the rhythms and scale of Pepys's London. Every other great evocation of London is for some reason misleading; it is startling to look at early maps of the metropolis after reading Pope, or Blake, or De Quincey, or even Dickens, and see how quickly the town gave way to fields. Pepys's London, on the other hand, seems exactly the size it really was, and from that one can draw the correct conclusion that here we have a writer who can be trusted.

If the *Diary* is from one point of view an absolutely faithful account of a long-lost society, it is nevertheless not antiquarian in style or appeal. Repeatedly, Pepys strikes us as a great realist novelist, born centuries too early. In part this is down to the subject of the *Diary*—the story of a smart young man clambering up in society by means of his wits and charm. It is not at all a seventeenth-century subject but one for Thackeray or Balzac. Pepys's commitment to recording the totality of experience would not really be matched until *Ulysses* and the diaries of Virginia Woolf. A chronology could be drawn up of the moments when the English novel entered successive rooms in the ordinary bourgeois house: in the nineteenth century it ventured out of the drawing room into the kitchen, and then into the bedroom, and at the beginning of the twentieth century into the bathroom and the privy. It was a slow process of annexation. Pepys, long before, had gone everywhere, and had told us everything. Virginia Woolf wrote once in her diary that "if the British spoke openly about W.C.'s, & copulation, then they might be stirred by universal emotions." Yes, indeed, the reader of Pepys may conclude.

A passion for details, however insignificant or undignified, is what seems to take Pepys out of his time. There are many celebrated instances of this curious quality in him, and it is worth saying that in most cases the observations would have seemed grossly indecorous to his contemporaries. One of the *Diary's* most magnificent set pieces is the return of

Charles II. Pepys was in one of the boats in the flotilla. "I went, and Mr. Mansell and one of the King's footmen, with a dog that the King loved (which shit in the boat, which made us laugh and me think that a King and all that belong to him are but just as others are)." The incontinent dog is a brilliantly improper presence in an account of a great historical occasion, and exactly the sort of thing Gogol would use to great effect. The interesting thing about this passage, which occurs very early in the *Diary*, is that one can see a certain loss of nerve; Pepys was torn between his instincts and the literary dictates of the time. No one else would even have mentioned the dog, but Pepys drew a not very convincing moral from it in a nod to propriety. That nervousness quickly disappears before the wonderful confidence of the *Diary*, which lies in Pepys's certainty that his observations were diverting on their own terms.

The two sections of the *Diary* that readers always remember are the accounts of the Great Plague, in 1665, and the Great Fire, in 1666. The passages proceed by the novelist's technique of amassing tiny, exact observations; and like the greatest nineteenth-century novelists, Pepys always gives the sense that he could go on looking after most people would have preferred to close their eyes. Sometimes it could be Conrad writing—as when, for instance, Pepys walked through London at the height of the plague and wrote, "But now, how few people I see, and those walking like people that had taken leave of the world." The section on the Great Fire is a justly celebrated tour de force, and again, in its extraordinary and unprecedented technique, leaps the centuries into something that trembles on the verge of the high Dickensian manner. There is no distance at all between the following famous observation and the description of the Gordon Riots in *Barnaby Rudge*:

Everybody endeavouring to remove their goods, and flinging into the River or bringing them into lighters that lay off. Poor people staying in their houses as long as till the very fire touched them, and then running into boats or clambering from one pair of stair by the water-side to another. And among

other things, the poor pigeons I perceive were loath to leave their houses, but hovered about the windows and balconies till they were some of them burned, their wings, and fell down.

From a seventeenth-century perspective, everything here is a deplorable breach of literary manners: the undignified interest in inessentials, the failure to assert any kind of moral about people's scrabbling after their possessions, and the eccentric, unpolished syntax ("till they were some of them burned, their wings, and fell down"). Not until Dickens would anyone else exploit the expressive potential of syntax like this, or demonstrate that the reader won't really feel the human horror of a catastrophe until he has been shown how the poor pathetic pigeons behaved.

It is worth stressing Pepys's astonishing modernity, since he has somehow acquired the reputation of a cozy read of mild, olde worlde charm. His brisk, vivid, clean style often surprises first-time readers: "But Lord, what a Hypocrite-like face she made to tell it me," he groaned about some boring anecdote Lady Batten told him. If that is not a modern sentence, it is certainly the sentence of a writer with a modern ambition—to write as men talk. His story, too, seems a modern one, and his preoccupations—lechery, food, money, and music—are much the same as ours; his technique and his way with a really funny story resemble Gogol's much more than any of his contemporaries. Even more modern than Gogol is the story of Pepys's getting so drunk after the coronation that he was sick all over himself, which is exactly like listening to an account of some undergraduate debauchery.

Of course, it will not do to treat Pepys entirely as our contemporary, and sometimes one realizes with a jolt that he was not very much like us at all. On June 21, 1662, he apparently spent much of the day whipping his houseboy for drinking the whey of the milk, and signed off by complaining how tired his arm was when he went to bed. He was alarmingly attracted by public hangings. His interests in general seem so worldly that it is always astonishing when one realizes that Pepys, like everyone else in his day, took religion

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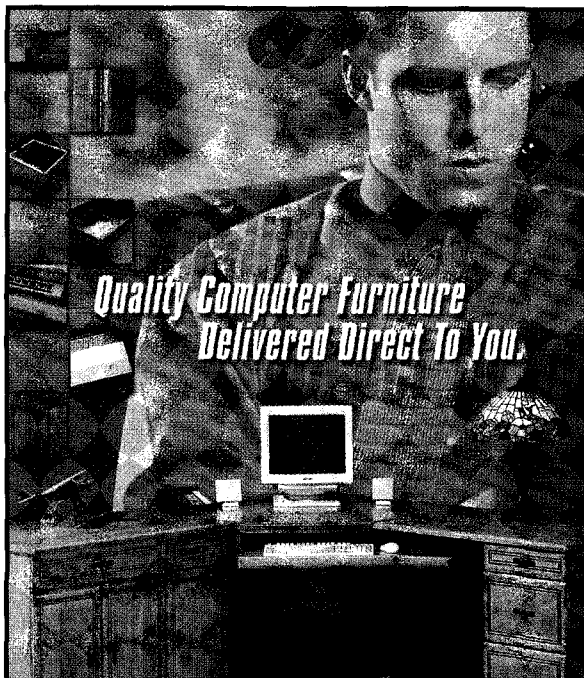
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very seriously. And his life was lived in circumstances so different from ours that the stylistic modernity of the *Diary* is rather misleading; in particular, there is no conceivable way that any man of Pepys's time could have the same sanguine view of his health that a man today has. All his life Pepys celebrated the anniversary of a successful operation to remove a "stone" from his bowels. That he recorded the intimate details of his illnesses and his wife's appalling genital sores is evidence not of an obsession with illness but simply of the way people thought at a time when medicine had not advanced greatly beyond Aristotle.

The sense of someone like us, of a universal quality, in Pepys is really only half the story. The *Diary* is not just an intimate, observant record of an individual life but a grand political drama told by a significant player. Of great writers in English, Pepys is, after Disraeli and John Buchan, among the most important in this sense. His was a brilliant career: he reformed and rationalized the navy, and established the basis for the formidable fighting force of the next 250 years. There are telling glimpses of Pepys's ruthless professionalism in the *Diary*—his labors over accounting procedures, his contempt for any sign of slackness or incompetence whether in his junior clerks, in his superiors, or in the King (the running commentary on the King's embarrassing inability to rise to any formal occasion is on its own worth the price of admission). He must have been terrifying; when a subordinate started whining about staying late at the office, Pepys had no compunction in resorting to threats and blackmail, saying mildly how surprised he was, having always heard great things about the gentleman's assiduity when he was working for the late regicides.

Although Pepys's contemporaries would not have been surprised to learn that so important and influential a man had recorded the events of his life, they would have found it odd that what posterity values in his journal is trivial things. In that sense, perhaps, they would have been better readers of him than we are; they would have valued much in the *Diary* that we pass over.

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MOUNTS READY ON DECKS, PATIOS OR LANDSCAPE TIES

Some writers' lives are so closely bound to a classic account that any modern biographer starts at a disadvantage. Biographers of Johnson, of Rousseau, of Berlioz, have to live with an impossible competitor. Pepys's life falls very firmly into this category, even though the *Diary* covers only nine years of it. If anyone can overcome this great difficulty, it is Claire Tomalin. For some reason Englishwomen are unrivaled in the field; Hilary Spurling, Diana Souhami, Victoria Glendinning, and many others may look at the genre and be reminded of what Quintilian said about the Romans and satire: "*Satura quidem tota nostra est.*"

No more elaborate recommendation is needed than Tomalin's name. In her previous biographies she has set out the lives of some very disparate figures with unfailing patience and an imaginative sympathy that verges on the uncanny; her lives of Mary Wollstonecraft, Katherine Mansfield, the actress Mrs. Jordan, are all unforgettable, and her last biography, a life of Jane Austen, was a breathtaking feat. Any life of Austen must be written on terrifyingly slender evidence, like a life of Shakespeare; this one gave readers the dizzying impression of standing behind Austen's desk, observing her at the moment of creation.

Tomalin's *Samuel Pepys* faces the opposite problem. We know pretty well what Pepys was doing every day from 1660 to 1669, and everything confirms that his account is not just accurate and truthful in almost every respect but guilty of very few omissions. Subsequently, too, Pepys was so prominent a figure that an enormous body of evidence about his life and career survives. All this gives a biographer enough material for a work like Arthur Bryant's three-volume biography from the 1930s—the sort of heart-sinking groaner that might as well begin with the sentence "Call me magisterial." Claire Tomalin's life, on the other hand, is a magnificent triumph. Her research has been not just scrupulously thorough but dazzlingly imaginative.

The single most impressive thing about this fresh, serious book is that after finishing it, one suddenly reflects that at no moment did one ask the question that ought, surely, to hang over any

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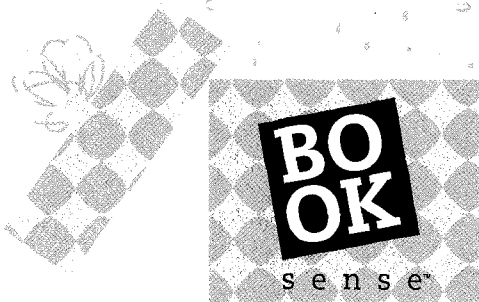
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biography of Pepys: "What is this really adding to what the *Diary* tells us?" It is impossible to believe that a biographer could expect to do anything more than fill in the events of Pepys's life up to 1660 and generally summarize and concur with his account of 1660 to 1669 (which is the part of his life any reader will be most interested in). The later events must be told, but after the death of his wife, Elizabeth, most of what we know about him involves his work, with only occasional tantalizing glimpses of the familiar unbuttoned personality.

The brilliance of Tomalin's previous biographies has lain in their unfailingly tactful and plausible speculations on sometimes very limited evidence. Indeed, one starts to think that what fascinates and tempts her most is gaps and absences—what her subjects have not spoken and will not speak about. The pre- and post-*Diary* phases of Pepys's life, which obviously require such speculation, are brilliantly believable in this book, particularly when Tomalin feels her way toward an idea of what Pepys's relations were like with his post-1670 companion, Mary Skinner, and draws the outlines of Skinner's character. It was the longest relationship of Pepys's life, but we know almost nothing about it. Tomalin puts together a few scraps of evidence, tentatively and imaginatively explores the implications, and then stops, admitting the impropriety of venturing any further. It is supremely respectful and convincing.

That fascination and expert resourcefulness in dealing with gaps, with the unspoken, with the unrecorded, yields an absolutely stunning stretch when we come to the great challenge for the biographer: the years of the *Diary* itself. She draws back from narrative and instead supplies a very satisfying blend of biography, literary analysis, and expansion of the ideas, assumptions, and beliefs in the *Diary*. There is a series of perceptive insights into the way Pepys structured a story; there are isolated explorations of the way Pepys wrote about the King and other individual actors, and returned to themes, such as jealousy, illness, and marriage; there are proper, serious arguments with Pepys's habitual behavior of the sort in which every reader will occasionally indulge. But the most inspired passages

in this biography are explorations of absences. In particular, Tomalin is drawn to contemplate the unheard voices of Pepys's women; the letters Elizabeth wrote, which are lost, are held up to us like shining Christmas parcels, never to be opened. In one wonderful chapter the lives of three overlooked women, all named Jane, are assembled from just enough scattered fragments to reconstruct their voices, and to provide what a biographer ought to long for—a new perspective from which to observe and consider the subject's behavior. In a bold, angry flight of the imagination, Tomalin sees exactly what Pepys must have looked like to these shadowy and transient players in the drama of his life. One of them was a clever and confident servant, condemned to a constrained existence; she and another Jane were unwelcome recipients of Pepys's sexual attention. Most readers of the *Diary* lazily go along with Pepys's version of himself as an amateurish fumbler, always comically frustrated in his attempts at seduction. But in these portraits and in another, that of Betty Michell, Tomalin coldly refuses this cheerful image, and constructs the situation from the woman's point of view. She grimly recounts how Betty Michell helplessly endured Pepys's insistent assaults; she had no alternative if so powerful and influential a man insisted, and both she and her husband must have known that their lives might depend on Pepys's continuing good will. Tomalin has shored up just enough ground on which to stand and look at the man with someone else's eyes. It is a prodigious feat of sympathy, and of clear, cold analysis.

Here, and throughout this biography, we get the exhilarating sense that we were mistaken after all. Pepys did not, in fact, tell us everything, despite appearances. An ordinarily accomplished biographer might aim as high as stripping Pepys of his cozy fireside reputation and showing us a young man on the make, with anxieties and ordinary human worries—and Tomalin does all this extremely well. But it takes an exceptional biographer to go so confidently beyond the apparent totality of daily experience presented in Pepys's *Diary*. ■

Philip Hensher's new novel, The Mulberry Empire, was published in the United States in August.

BOOKS
MAJOR MINOR

Kate Chopin's late-nineteenth-century "local color" short stories, set largely within the Creole society of Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana (which remains to this day perhaps the most intensely exotic place in the United States), are distinguished by a detached and skeptical authorial voice and an elegant and efficient use of dialogue. But even the best of them feel constrained, largely because the editorial policies of the magazines for which she wrote (including this one) hampered her exploration of the subjects she was increasingly drawn to—particularly female sexuality.



**KATE CHOPIN:
COMPLETE
NOVELS AND
STORIES**

edited by Sandra
M. Gilbert

Library of
America

Her first novel, *At Fault*, is a wooden melodrama. She destroyed the manuscript of her second. Her third, *The Awakening* (1899), which depicts the adulterous experiments of a married woman, Edna Pontellier, was rejected almost unanimously by critics. The accompanying storm of scandal silenced Chopin, and she died five years later, brokenhearted. But the novel is a minor masterpiece—and it was the most important work of fiction in America to date about a woman's erotic life. Marked by an almost Gallic clarity of style and moral coolness (Chopin greatly admired Maupassant and Madame de Staël, whom she read in the original), the book is far more complex than many of its champions—who insist that it be read as a proto-feminist tract—would have it: Chopin sees "awakened" sexuality itself as more destructive than life-affirming. And although the novel takes for granted that the bond between a mother and her children is the most profound love a woman can feel, Chopin also, strikingly, depicts that bond—not husbands, lovers, or the dictates of society—as the most profound obstacle to female self-fulfillment. (Before Edna drowns herself, Chopin

writes, "[Her] children appeared before her like antagonists who had overcome her; who had overpowered and sought to drag her into the soul's slavery for the rest of her days. But she knew a way to elude them.")

Certainly this novel and a good number of Chopin's short stories—"In Sabine," "Desirée's Baby," "Athénaisé," "The Story of an Hour," "A Night in Acadie," and the posthumously published "The Storm" among them—are stunning, but they are already available in several inexpensive editions and collections. The question is, does Chopin's oeuvre merit the Library of America canonization? Do her complete works, which include the execrable *At Fault* and her many second-rate short stories, deserve to be put on the same shelf with the complete Melville, Hawthorne, and Nabokov? (Then again, a single volume devoted to Chopin is far more defensible than another of the publisher's fall titles—a two-volume edition of Paul Bowles's works.) —**BENJAMIN SCHWARZ**

FALSE START

This book begins very well. Candida Wilton, a woman of late middle age, recently betrayed by her husband, divorced, and estranged from her three grown daughters, buys a flat in a menacing section of central London and begins a diary, hoping to make something of what she perceives as the nothingness of her days. Her tartness is delectable as she discusses her ex-husband—"He is good, good, good. I have come to hate him"—and a friend she dislikes and yet cannot drop. And the friendships she begins to form with other women are a promising and fresh subject for a novel. Without half trying, Drabble can conjure a more vivid character than most other writers can, but the book reads like a sketch for a more considered work to come. Partway through she switches to the third person, as Candida and six female friends



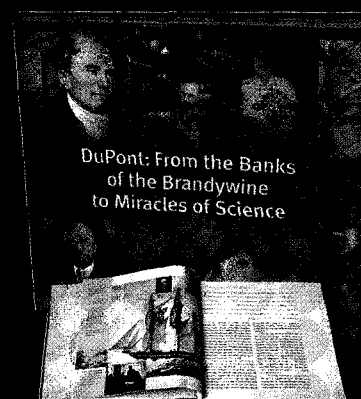
**THE SEVEN
SISTERS**

by Margaret
Drabble

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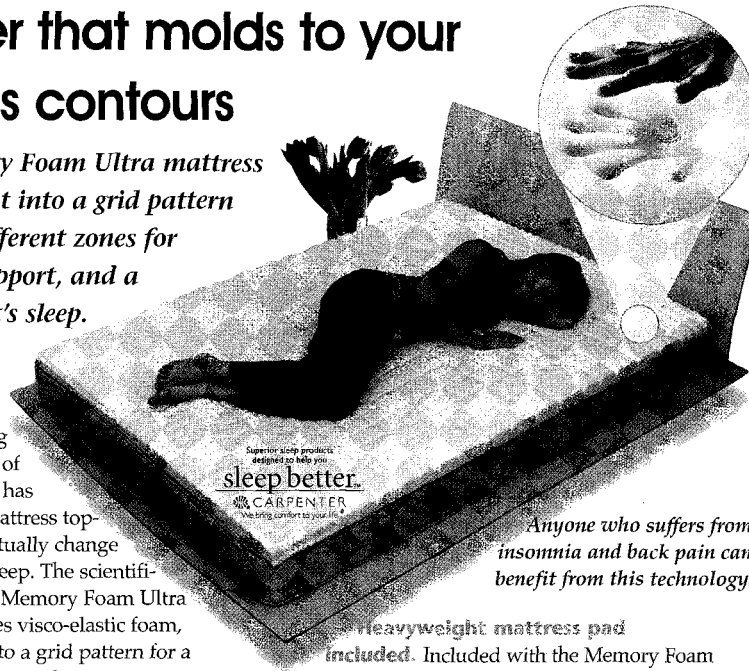
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(the seven sisters of the title) retrace a portion of Aeneas's journey, but though the style here is tighter and more polished than in the first-person segments, it doesn't quite compensate for the loss of Candida's sharp observations; and Drabble dips too shallowly into all these characters to pique the reader's interest in any one. Their journey makes for merely pleasant reading; one feels cheated, suspecting that the author is just covering miles and pages. The motive behind still another shift in the narration is intriguing, but the eventual revelation that this section is meant to be clumsy and hollow doesn't mitigate the trial of reading it. An accomplished writer's readers have relentlessly high expectations, and this novel doesn't meet them. —CHRISTINA SCHWARZ

KNOW-IT-ALL

.....

The sixth and final volume of Aldous Huxley's complete essays closes an important and admirable publishing venture. Huxley wrote that the essay is "a literary device for saying almost everything about almost anything," and these exceptionally edited and organized books, with lengthy, detailed, and astute introductions, display a wide-ranging intellect unmatched among twentieth-century men of letters. In "Literature and Science," reprinted in this volume, Huxley contrasted Matthew Arnold, who advocated humanistic learning, with T. H. Huxley, who advocated a scientific education. Aldous, the great-nephew of the former and the grandson of the latter, synthesized their visions. With an ironic mind and an assured and lucid style, he probed in these essays philosophy, religion, history, architecture, painting, music, literature, technology, and the social, natural, and physical sciences. (Despite his interest in Eastern mysticism and the fact that his *The Doors of Perception* would become a

Aldous Huxley

Complete Essays

ALDOUS HUXLEY: COMPLETE ESSAYS VOLUME VI

edited by Robert S. Baker and James Sexton

Ivan R. Dee

bible for the pseudo-intellectual strain of the 1960s drug culture, Huxley's aesthetic preference was for the classically restrained, and he concentrated on structural and formal questions in his music and art criticism.) Inevitably, the essays in a complete assemblage will vary in quality, and this last volume, which covers the final years of Huxley's life, is, not surprisingly, the weakest (he wrote in this period more than I want to know about such topics as ESP and mescaline). Still, Huxley's peculiar combination of the playful and the trenchant characterizes the best writing here, and taken together these books present a coherent cultural and intellectual history of the past century. (And a history of that century's periodical essay: Huxley began his career as a journalist writing for Britain's elegantly learned *Athenaeum*, and he ended it writing largely for *Esquire*, from which many of the pieces in this volume have been reprinted. His essay "Back Numbers" contains probably the first and last reference to James Fitzjames Stephen to appear in that magazine.) —BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

LIVES ON THE LEFT

.....

Novels of the Depression typically promise noble, wronged proletarians; greedy, malicious bosses and bankers; the occasional impassioned slogan delivered out of the righteous, inflamed imagination of the all-too-obtruding writer. You won't find much of that in Tess Slesinger's *The Unpossessed*—except, that is, as fodder for savagely precise satire. New York Review Books's reissue marks at least the third incarnation of this novel since it was first published, in 1934. Unlike so many other thirties novels, *The Unpossessed* treats the "topical" themes of its age as subsets of a much larger, more abiding theme in literature: the folly of all human (and particularly of pompous



THE
UNPOSSESSED:
A NOVEL OF
THE THIRTIES

by Tess
Slesinger,
introduction
by Elizabeth
Hardwick

New York
Review Books

intellectual) endeavor that aims at imposing a rational direction on something as incorrigibly messy as history. Slesinger's note-perfect depiction of this folly gives *The Unpossessed* its irresistible narrative energy. Three former college left-wingers are out to found a magazine. In the process, many of their elaborate political and editorial presumptions come crashing down, revealing individual agendas behind the ideology. Politics is chiefly the lit fuse that brightly illuminates the characters' personal foibles and miseries even as it guarantees their most public combustion. And Slesinger depicts that politics as the exclusive, self-dramatizing sport of men who are all too often terrified of more basic aspects of living—intimacy with women chief among them. The elemental domestic longings of Margaret, the wife of one of the magazine's founders, stand out in sharp contrast to the tormented public-intellectual career of her husband, who persuades her with political rationalizations to get an abortion. "We'd go soft," he announces in the moment of decision, "... we'd go bourgeois." Margaret relents, thinking, "Yes, they would go soft, they might slump and start liking people, they might weaken and forgive stupidity, they might yawn and forget to hate." For all its antic wit, *The Unpossessed* is a tremendously sober and bleak meditation on modern politics and modern life alike. —CHRIS LEHMANN

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Finders Keepers: The Story of a Man Who Found \$1 Million, by Mark Bowden. Atlantic Monthly Press. Bowden's story on the air war in Afghanistan, "The Kabulki Dance," appears in this issue.

All Is Vanity, by Christina Schwarz. Doubleday. Schwarz has been a regular contributor to *The Atlantic* since 1996.

American Ground: Unbuilding the World Trade Center, by William Langewiesche. North Point Press/Farrar, Straus & Giroux. This book originated as a series of three articles—"The Inner World," "The Rush to Recover," and "The Dance of the Dinosaurs"—commissioned by *The Atlantic* for the July/August, September, and October issues.

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BOOKS

"OUR SAINT, OUR UMPIRE"

An appreciation of Mary McCarthy, whose literary and political writing is well represented in a new anthology

BY THOMAS MALLON

.....

I don't suppose my hands ever trembled more than they did in opening a letter—four onionskin pages, airmailed from Paris—that Mary McCarthy wrote to me on March 23, 1973. "Thank you for sending me your honors thesis," she began, "which I have been rather slow to read." I had sent this 152-page disquisition on her work at the urging of my adviser and with, as one biographer says in telling the story, "the innocence of the very young." I was twenty-one.

McCarthy pronounced me, in her letter's first paragraph, "quite a lot wiser and more studious than the adult professionals"—chief among them Alfred Kazin—"who have elected me as their field to trample over." But she went on to ask whether I would "mind a few correc-

tions"—three and a half pages, crowded with elite type, that took exception to my callow suspicions ("I don't use strategies with interviewers. I just try to answer the questions. That is probably hard

for a young person to believe of an older one"); my naive politics ("You miss the point of my controversy with Diana Trilling" over what reprisals might follow a Communist takeover of South Vietnam); even my use of the term "gourmet cooking."

I find that phrase abhorrent and would find the thing abhorrent if I was sure what it was. It ought to mean, if anything, very rich, showy dishes, with lots of foie gras, cream, caviar, liqueurs, flambéing—the opposite of good food. I like cooking and do it

well, I think. But that ought to be normal. If anybody who takes the trouble to put a decent meal together has to be classed as a "gourmet," that is an odious situation.

Here, addressed to me alone, was the same thrillingly authoritative voice I had heard in her novels, where every character, including the autobiographical heroines, suffered this same lash of "correction." It was the voice I'd heard in her theater criticism, in her memoirs, polemics, and travelogues. If the term "man of letters" had any meaning left, I had decided in picking my thesis subject, this woman had first claim to it. I had her picture—the elegant profile, the terrifying smile—taped to my dorm-room wall. It was "the thinking man's pinup," I told friends.

"Do you plan to be a writer?" she asked, near the close of her letter. Well, if she thought it a legitimate question, then perhaps it was a reasonable aim. The fact is I did plan to be one, and could name the book that had given me the ambition: a volume of her essays, *On the Contrary*, published in 1961.

Now, thirteen years after McCarthy's

A BOLT FROM THE BLUE AND OTHER ESSAYS

by Mary McCarthy, edited and with an introduction by A. O. Scott

New York Review Books

death, in time for what would have been her ninetieth birthday, A. O. Scott has assembled a collection of her literary, cultural, and political writing that matches the scope and extends the temporal reach of that (scandalously) out-of-print volume. *A Bolt From the Blue* distills a half century of McCarthy's nonfiction, and the experience of rereading so much of it at once has made me look more approvingly than I've ever before been able to upon my youth. Say what you will about the scrawny, awkward creature in that dorm room, he had good taste.

McCarthy stumbled into her first important writing, the drama criticism she began composing for *Partisan Review* in the 1930s. When putting together a collection of these theater pieces a couple of decades later, she recalled, "Being an editor, at least in name, I had to be allowed to do *something*, and the Theatre Chronicle' (we spelled it 'theater') was 'made work,' like the WPA jobs of the period." She came to regard some of her youthful pronouncements as "insufferable," but today's reader, at a much further remove, will find these early pieces, some more than sixty years old, remarkably fresh and funny.

By the early 1940s McCarthy was already and irreducibly her mature critical self, the gaily severe judge Norman Mailer would one day call "our saint, our umpire, our lit arbiter, our broadsword." A firm believer in sense over sensibility, she pondered Blanche DuBois's "poetic moment of self-definition" in *A Streetcar Named Desire*:

She who has never spoken an honest word in her life is allowed, indeed encouraged, to present her life to the audience as a vocational decision, an artist's election of the beautiful, an act of supreme courage, the choice of the thorny way.

Unlike the novel's achievements in realism, which excited McCarthy's ardent championship, drama's attempts in that direction led only to paradox. On stage, she argued, realism became "a depreciation of the real," sinking to its nadir at the middle of the twentieth century in "the Broadway cave-world of the American School playwrights, who have accustomed us to a stage inhabited by apes with complexes."

The typical character of the so-called American realist school is a sub-human member of the lower urban middle class. This creature is housed in a living room filled with installment-plan furniture, some of which will be broken before the play is over.

In dramas of this kind words fail the dramatist and the hero equally.

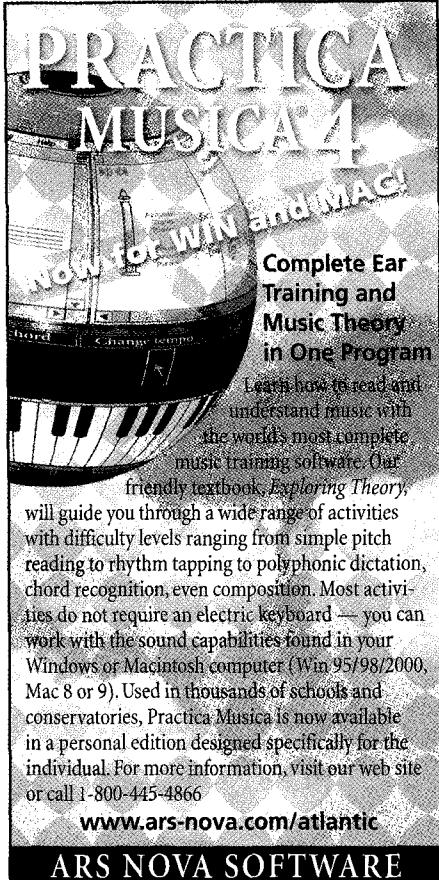
Our American realists do not *try* to write badly. Many, like Arthur Miller, strive to write "well," i.e., pretentiously, but like Dreiser in the novel they are cursed with inarticulateness. They "grope." They are, as O'Neill said of himself, "fogbound."

Edmund Wilson, McCarthy's second husband, expressed a certain exasperation that her idea of theater reviewing was to file a "crushing brief against a play." But Scott's varied new compilation reminds us how much entertaining public service McCarthy provided by going after, in the same manner, certain species of contemporary fiction. In 1962 she paid a sort of social worker's call on J. D. Salinger's self-sanctifying Glass family, and reported back:

In Hemingway's work there was hardly anybody but Hemingway in a series of disguises, but at least there was only one Papa per book. To be confronted with the seven faces of Salinger, all wise and lovable and simple, is to gaze into a terrifying narcissus pool.

She wondered whether Seymour Glass had killed himself not out of an excess of sensitivity, the usual coroner's ruling, but "because he had been lying, his author had been lying, and it was all terrible, and he was a fake."

McCarthy gave her most sustained attention, along with her heart, to the great nineteenth-century novels—English, French, and especially Russian. Scott includes her avid appreciation of *Anna Karenina*, a novel so sensual as to be "a book of the body," a book "terribly true, almost truer than any novel ought to be," the only novel ever, with its "temple-like Greek logic," to reach the status of tragedy. With perhaps less passion, but greater precision, she wrote "On *Madame Bovary*" in 1964, deciding that a "central metaphor" of this novel was the lending library, "because it is



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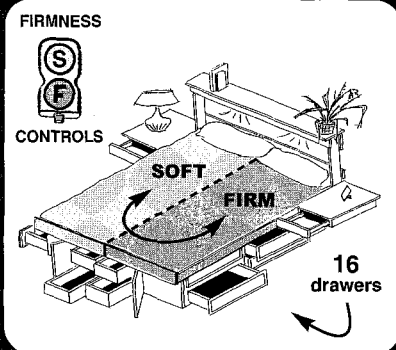
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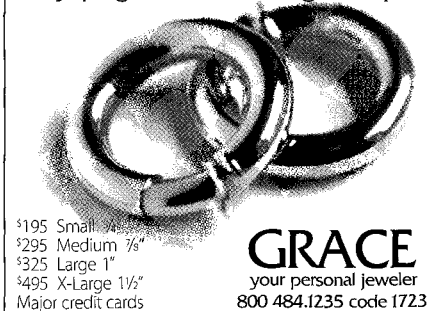


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the inexhaustible source of *idées reçues*—borrowed ideas and stock sentiments which circulate tritely among the population." Emma's dull husband, Charles, was to McCarthy the hero of the book, uncorrupted as he is by the consumer's lust for fashionable notions and material goods: "The only thing in life he chooses is Emma. She is his first and last piece of self-expression." McCarthy saw Flaubert's book as "the first novel to deal with what is now called mass culture," a subject that was starting to dominate her own fiction at the time she wrote this essay. In fact, Emma Bovary might be regarded as the ninth young woman in *The Group*.

"The Fact in Fiction," published in 1960, is McCarthy's chief pronouncement on the novel's onetime "concern with the actual world." The "fetishism of fact"—the great glut of *information* one finds in Balzac, for example—was to her a "splendid sickness," a kind of poetry. Reversing cause and effect, she went so far as to declare, "The more poetic a novel, the more it has the air of being a factual document." In regretting the postwar novelist's lack of real-world experience ("The writer today—and especially the young American writer—sees only other writers"), McCarthy was fighting an early round in a long, losing battle. Tom Wolfe, with much gusto if less erudition, would enter the same ring, on the same side, with his 1989 essay "Stalking the Billion-Footed Beast."

And yet in her own novels McCarthy ducked. She used the twentieth century's special horrors, genocide and the bomb, as a sort of escape clause from the novelist's old contract with the real world. She had given herself the out in "The Fact in Fiction": "It would seem that the novel, with its common sense, is of all forms the least adapted to encompass the modern world, whose leading characteristic is irreality." The brilliance and humor of McCarthy's meditations on social "progress" in novels such as *The Group* and even *Birds of America* can't finally compensate for the bloodlessness of these books. As her career went on, she could still prick up her ears at any form of cant; but toward the world's new objects and inventions she turned up her nose.

In *Ideas and the Novel*, a slim volume of lectures she published in 1980, she expresses amusement at Henry James's inability in *The Ambassadors* to specify the common household article that was the basis for the Newsome family fortune. "I have always guessed that it was a brass safety pin," she wrote. McCarthy herself would not have been too squeamish to name its modern equivalent—say, Velcro—but in her later novels she would have done so only with a kind of rote disgust, not real curiosity about the chemistry and economics and ambitions that had put such a thing into the world. I recently read through some unpublished letters she wrote to her last husband, James West, and found her on July 15, 1969, when Jim was still at their apartment in Paris and she already at their house in Castine, Maine, sighing that "tomorrow is Astronaut Day." She had decided to leave the housekeeper with the TV and go to an auction in nearby Ellsworth. Writing again four days later, she didn't mention *Apollo 11* but did remind Jim to bring over some lobster forks from Paris.

McCarthy's long residence in France, from the early 1960s until a few years before her death, distanced her not just from American life but from American literature as well. She infrequently reviewed works by U.S. contemporaries, concentrating instead on Europeans such as Italo Calvino, Nathalie Sarraute, and Monique Wittig. Perhaps from her despair over the possibilities for realistic fiction, she developed a surprising taste for novels of contrivance—ingenious but highly artificial productions such as Nabokov's *Pale Fire*, Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*, and Sarraute's *Between Life and Death*. None of these could be called "a book of the body," but they appealed, with their intricate puzzles and gimmickry, to McCarthy's love of deduction. "A Bolt From the Blue," her crystallographer's look at the complexities of *Pale Fire*, ends with perhaps the most fervent blurb of all time.

This centaur-work of Nabokov's, half-poem, half-prose, this merman of the deep, is a creature of perfect beauty, symmetry, strangeness, originality,

and moral truth. Pretending to be a curio, it cannot disguise the fact that it is one of the very great works of art of this century, the modern novel that everyone thought was dead and that was only playing possum.

McCarthy's exegeses of these experimental books avoid any postmodernist shrug over the supposed impossibility of assigning them a fixed meaning. She once told an interviewer that she believed "there is a truth, and that it's knowable." This conviction extended to literary texts, which required not deconstruction but solution. Exasperated by obtuse reviews of her own fiction, she once declared that every book "should be published with instructions on how to read it." She set out to write an owner's manual for these books by Sarraute and Nabokov and Calvino, whose *If on a Winter's Night* she saw being created in "an old-fashioned small-town garage (maybe an old Fiat place)."

Readers of this new collection will take immense pleasure in McCarthy's high-speed aphorisms, flawless taxonomies, and chains of reasoning. Her critical writing is unusually rich in figurative language, but it rarely jumps from strict simile, whose "like" keeps things nailed to the here and now, into high-flying metaphor, which doesn't so much compare things as transpose them. One senses in this the trouble McCarthy had releasing her splendid critical mind into the wilds of fiction. In that letter she sent me in 1973 she wrote,

As for novelists needing to be stupid, there is something in that; at least they have a need to learn from the act of selection and construction: their ideas aren't there in advance. Writing a novel is quite different from writing an essay or historical work, where your ideas are fairly clear to you when you sit down. Of course I don't think I'm stupid and maybe I'm not stupid enough in that special sense to be a true novelist.

In his introduction Scott expresses the hope that this collection will "make a somewhat paradoxical case for her importance as a novelist—one of a handful of indispensable American writers of realist fiction in the immediate postwar era." After three decades of reading McCarthy, I must reluctantly conclude that

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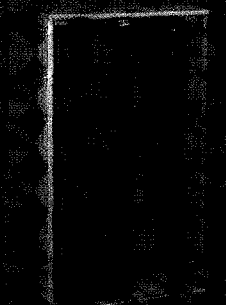
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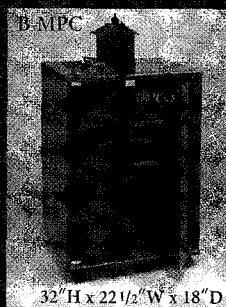
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this well-intentioned enterprise is hopeless. Her novels are less the fulfillment of her critical writings than an extension of them. Helen Vendler, with some justice, once called *Birds of America* a "fictional essay" instead of a novel, and McCarthy herself—again in that 1973 letter—wrote that she "wasn't trying to make [her] own work illustrate or embody those principles [in 'The Fact in Fiction']." Her novels "aren't novels in the sense that the old novels were," she explained.

Nobody in his right mind would take *B. of A.* for a realistic novel. Or *The Group*. Or *A Charmed Life*. *The Groves of Academe* is the closest, but not that either. Their factuality is in a different tradition altogether, maybe of the epic (Homeric catalogues), turned into mock epic. Something of Rabelais' lists, possibly, and something of the Catholic litany.

Scott fills the second half of his omnibus with McCarthy's political writing, which shows, not always for the better, more change and development than her literary writing does. The cornerstone of this section is a 1953 memoir called "My Confession," in which McCarthy recollected the Stalinist-dominated intellectual life of New York in the 1930s and recalled how she became, by a combination of accident and temperament, an anticommunist. At a publishing party a novelist she knew asked if she thought the disgraced Trotsky was "entitled to a hearing." She answered yes—the wrong answer to this anything-but-rhetorical question—and was soon astonished to find herself on the letterhead of a Committee for the Defense of Leon Trotsky. "My Confession" is a brilliant piece, both comic and moving, full of a descriptive and narrative vigor she could never quite equal in *The Group*, which covered some of the same territory. Here is her evocation of those downtown social gatherings she went to in the mid-thirties:

On couches with wrinkled slipcovers, little spiky-haired girls, like spiders, dressed in peasant blouses and carapaced with Mexican jewelry, made voracious passes at baby-faced juveniles; it was said that they "did it for the Party," as a recruiting effort ... All of us, generally, became very drunk; the atmosphere was horribly sordid, with cigarette burns on tables, spilled

drinks, ashes everywhere, people passed out on the bed with the coats or necking, you could not be sure which. Nobody cared what happened because there was no host or hostess. The fact that a moneyed person had been simple enough to lend the apartment seemed to make the guests want to desecrate it, to show that they were exercising not a privilege but a right.

The source of the vigor was her own voice, the freedom to write in it, something provided by the essay genre itself and unavailable in the writing of the novel, in which the direct authority of the nineteenth-century narrator had dissolved, helplessly and for good, into an indirect free style that filtered everything through a character's perceptions. In a 1961 interview McCarthy spoke of this as a frustration: "The technical difficulties are so great, in projecting yourself, in feigning an alien consciousness, that too much energy gets lost, I think, in the masquerade." It was even truer for her than for such contemporaries as Mailer and James Baldwin and Gore Vidal. None of her novels—underestimated as some of them are—approach her nonfiction masterpiece, *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood* (1957), in which she had her own life, and her own voice, to work with.

However fortuitous its origin, McCarthy practiced her anticommunism with honor and wit for many years, making the claims for a democratic left, infiltrating the Stalinist-controlled 1949 Waldorf Conference of artists and intellectuals, and defending American culture against Simone de Beauvoir and other pompous frauds. In 1947 she wrote,

It is true that America produces and consumes more cars, soap, and bathtubs than any other nation, but we live among these objects rather than by them. Americans build skyscrapers: Le Corbusier worships them ... When an American heiress wants to buy a man, she at once crosses the Atlantic. The only really materialistic people I have ever met have been Europeans.

Only several years after publishing the above, however, she would worry, "How is wealth to be spread without the spread of uniformity? How create a cushion of plenty without stupefaction

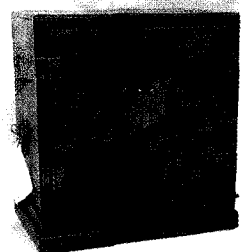
of the soul and the senses?" I wish I could agree with Scott that McCarthy's "estrangement from American mass culture" in her later decades "largely avoided the traps of snobbery and pessimism." In fact she was often ensnared by both. Her revulsion over the Vietnam War led to a conflation of the aesthetic and the political that was for a while breathtaking in its completeness. In a short book about her 1967 trip to South Vietnam, while complaining that America had transformed Saigon into "a gigantic PX," she could not keep herself from enclosing even such a neutral phrase as "cool drink" in a set of disdainful quotation marks. The style of her rhetoric ("a low-grade primitive in uniform," "fatuous military mouthpiece") sometimes bordered on the Stalinist, and a second volume of war journalism (*Hanoi*, 1968) sentimentalized the North Vietnamese cause and regime to an extent her admirers now prefer to forget.

McCarthy recovered balance and acuity in a book on Watergate, *The Mask of State* (1974), a fine last hurrah of reportage in which she flayed and sectioned Richard Nixon's men with gleeful precision. She observed John Ehrlichman before Senator Sam Ervin's committee in the summer of 1973.

Perhaps he cannot help his face, but he looks like somebody of a deeply criminal nature, out of a medieval fresco: the upward sneering curl of the left-hand side of the mouth matched, on the bias, by the upward lift of the right eyebrow, above which there is a barely discernible scar; the aggressive tilted nose that camera-men say has been growing all week, the sinister (literally) thrust of the jaw ... Ehrlichman was resilient, extremely loquacious, limber as his eyebrow; he thought very fast, deflecting a question almost before it reached him, impatiently interrupting. His thinking process was a massive motor response to a set of stimuli.

McCarthy attributed the public's Watergate outrage, at least in part, to "a genuine need for atonement and purification" after Vietnam, and she saw in the Senate hearings flickers of an America she had more or less given up for lost—the republic of men like her upstanding grandfather, the lawyer Harold Preston ("this good American,"

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she called him in *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood*). She detected in Senator Ervin, to whom she dedicated her book, a faith that the house of government "with a little elbow grease can be cleaned and restored to at least a semi-pristine condition." McCarthy was more doubtful; but the hearings were, in their way, a Vietnam purgative for her, too.

Largely absent from her decades of political writing is any reflection upon the civil-rights movement or modern feminism. The first seems never to have engaged her much; the second was mostly an irritant. She told one French publication, "I don't mean that I disagree with the goals of equal pay, and so on, it's the domestic side that I find so repellent. I can't see the point of devoting yourself to the constant emotions of competitiveness and envy. And I don't see why people should dislike serving." Her most famous novel depicts a group of Vassar graduates who for the most part are regressing, surrendering a largeness of outlook and levelheadedness that came naturally to their mothers.

McCarthy has been lucky in her biographers, particularly the most recent, Frances Kiernan, whose *Seeing Mary Plain*, issued in paperback this year, succeeds not only in taking the critical measure of its subject but also in capturing her on the first-name basis promised by the title. Kiernan is unafraid to reassemble all the girlishness, romance, and stubbornness (McCarthy would no more have used a credit card than she would a cake mix) that surrounded her subject's gleaming critical mind. McCarthy has also been lucky in Scott, who put together this collection of her work with real intelligence and enthusiasm. One might argue here and there with his selections (Was that essay on Lisbon really good enough to make the cut? Why not McCarthy's piece on Dickens to go along with the Tolstoy and Flaubert?), but that's part of the pleasure for aficionados encountering such a retrospective.

Scott has also saved McCarthy from her very late, weakening work, especially *How I Grew* (1987), a sadly flat-footed recapitulation of the childhood

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she had already reconstructed so perfectly in *Catholic Girlhood*, thirty years before. By the end McCarthy's style had sprouted bits of fussy, antique phrasing—"Well!"; "Not to leave you in suspense, Reader"; "But stop!"—like an old woman's ruffles or moles, and it's a relief not to see too much of this on display.

One welcomes, however, any opportunity to praise the bravest act of McCarthy's last decade: exposing the fraudulent Lillian Hellman ("Every word she writes is a lie, including 'and' and 'the'") and then refusing to settle the lawsuit that resulted from her bon mot, no matter how much stress and financial peril that entailed. The Hellman-McCarthy duel was generally trivialized by commentators, who talked of it as amusing or pathetic, a sort of geriatric catfight; it's even the basis for a play (with music) by Nora Ephron coming to Broadway this fall. But I would go so far as to say that it was one of the most important writers' controversies of the past twenty years. It sent McCarthy back into battle against the same fellow-traveling falsification she had fought decades before, and would provide a rallying cry in the decade after her death for those unimpressed by a flood of literary "memoirs," mostly by the young, that had scarcely more respect for the literal truth than Hellman had demonstrated in her best-selling recollections. McCarthy's aggressive stance gave her a last chance to be necessary and superb.

She spent much of her life in an acknowledged battle between "excited scruples and inertia of will." The essays Scott has collected remind us time and again of her simple desire—a species of the common sense she found in the nineteenth-century novel—to separate right from wrong. "Is it really so difficult," she asked in "My Confession," "to tell a good action from a bad one? I think one usually knows right away or a moment afterward, in a horrid flash of regret." Or, as she put it in "The American Realist Playwrights" (1961): "If someone tells you he is going to make 'a realistic decision,' you immediately understand that he has resolved to do something bad." For all her intractableness, McCarthy tried to be a

good person, and if that sounds quaint or simplistic to our ears, it's only a measure of how far we've fallen from the moral world of Tolstoy and Dickens. She attempted to be good even in North Vietnam, however credulous she'd been made by her own antiwar fervor.

The private tumults and crises I had been undergoing, trivial as was their occasion (who cared whether I wore that ring made from a shot-down plane or whether I said "puppet" or "Viet Cong"?), involved the omnipresence, the ubiquity of God. *He* cared. Being an unbeliever made no difference. I had swallowed Him too many times as a child at the communion rail, so that He had come to live inside me like a cherry stone growing or like Socrates' unshakable companion and insistent interlocutor: oneself.

It's unclear how many people are reading McCarthy, or even remember her, these days. As I write this, in the Westport, Connecticut, public library, a check of the computerized catalogue shows that none of the twenty-one titles bearing her name is checked out. Perhaps Scott's anthology will change that, at least for a while. It's a comforting thought, because I don't expect another writer like McCarthy to come along for a very long time. Most American novelists today have no critical faculty, no discernible aesthetic, and not much inclination to write anything besides their fiction. Many, in my experience, don't enjoy reading.

If that letter she sent in the spring of 1973 were the only personal experience I had of her, it would remain, in memory, a life-giving boost to a very underconfident young man. As it was, I ended up having years of friendship and practical encouragement from her. I still keep her books on a shelf just to the left of my desk, and in trying to sum up my feelings about her, I find that I can't do better than paraphrase her own farewell to the critic Philip Rahv, one of her early lovers: if no two people are alike, she was less like anybody else than anybody. ▀

Thomas Mallon, a novelist and critic, is a contributing editor of The Atlantic. His most recent book is Mrs. Paine's Garage and the Murder of John F. Kennedy (2002).

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PURSUIITS & RETREATS

TRAVEL

HOME THOUGHTS FROM ABROAD

*Travel is largely a matter of enjoying differences,
but this is seldom a permanent pleasure*

BY JAN MORRIS

.....

*There goes a swallow to Venice—
the stout seafarer!*

*Seeing those birds fly, makes one wish
for wings.*

So wrote old Browning, sitting in his English garden one spring morning, and O! I know too well that delicious pull of distant parts, foreign places, and different ways of living. I have watched the birds fly off too, as the drizzle falls out of a gray Welsh sky, the sheep in the field next door stand there hang-dog and reproachful, and whenever the telephone rings it seems to be somebody getting the wrong number—oh, yes, I've wished for the wings of a 747 often enough, when the opposite of homesickness sets in.

And I know well, too, the exquisite thrill of moving into a new house somewhere altogether else, in somebody else's country, where the climate is different, the food is different, the light is different, where the mundane preoccupations of life at home don't seem to apply and it is even fun to go shopping. Travel itself, after all, is largely a matter of enjoying differences—why else would those swallows migrate? Transferring one's whole being—family, possessions, bank accounts, blankets, mixers, and all—gives us the same pleasure in less restless form.

It is seldom a permanent pleasure. Most people I know who move to a foreign part do not stay there forever, just as people who succumb to the allure of isolated islands generally seem to creep back sheepishly, sooner or later, to the

conveniences of suburbia. All my own excursions into the expatriate condition have been temporary, but that has not made them any the less exciting. When we find our dream retreat far away, most of us know well enough that its first foreign delights are presently going to wear off, until they hardly seem foreign at all; we put that out of our minds, though, and glory in our exotic new garden, poke happily around our smoke-stained antique kitchen, peer dreamily from our leaded casement window, as though it is all going to be fresh and strange forever.

I have had many such moments of delightful self-delusion. I remember as if it were yesterday the moment I first stepped aboard the superannuated river steamer *Saphir*, moored on the banks of the Nile in Cairo, where my family and I were to spend some of the happiest years of our lives. The Egyptian sun was blazing that day, but canvas awnings cast an exotic shade over the poop, which was littered with divans and cushions like a sultan's seraglio. In our living quarters the light streamed brazenly through the shutters in almost tangible rays. My workplace was the wheelhouse on the upper deck, all glass and blistered white paint, and here and there around the ship servants in spotless djellabas and turbans smilingly awaited our every pleasure.

The *Saphir* sank in the end, but we were long gone by then, and had moved into some other fascinatingly alien home. Was it the top-floor flat in the Venetian palace that came next,

with the majestic view over the Grand Canal and the soft swish of oars outside our windows that orchestrated the night hours? Or was it the apartment in the antebellum mansion in Vicksburg, Mississippi, with its high white balcony that Jefferson Davis had spoken from and its heady scents of tobacco plant and jasmine drifting past the kitchen window? Or the house above the water in Hong Kong, the sampans clustered below the bluff, the great container ships offshore, the clink of wind chimes and the clank of cooking pots?

I forget now which came when: what about the apartment in Sydney, looking below the Harbour Bridge to the flying white wings of the Opera House beyond, or the sweet little clapboard house in Cranbury, New Jersey, or that apartment on Forty-ninth Street in Manhattan, where the fire engines triumphantly rode by, or—yes, when did we live in that adorable chalet in the Haute-Savoie, where we skied in our own back yard in the winter, and in the spring welcomed the itinerant distillery to the apple orchards. They were foreign places every one—alien, exotic places—and they have blurred in my memory into a glorious mosaic of new experiences and new delights.

Why is it, then, that I have never felt entirely comfortable, entirely natural, in those delectable foreign homes? Other people evidently have no such trouble. Americans in particular, who come from restless stock by the nature of things, seem to find themselves altogether at ease putting down roots, however transient, in foreign parts. It is part of their heritage, I suppose. They are settlers by inheritance, and they are still especially accomplished at making themselves homes away from home.

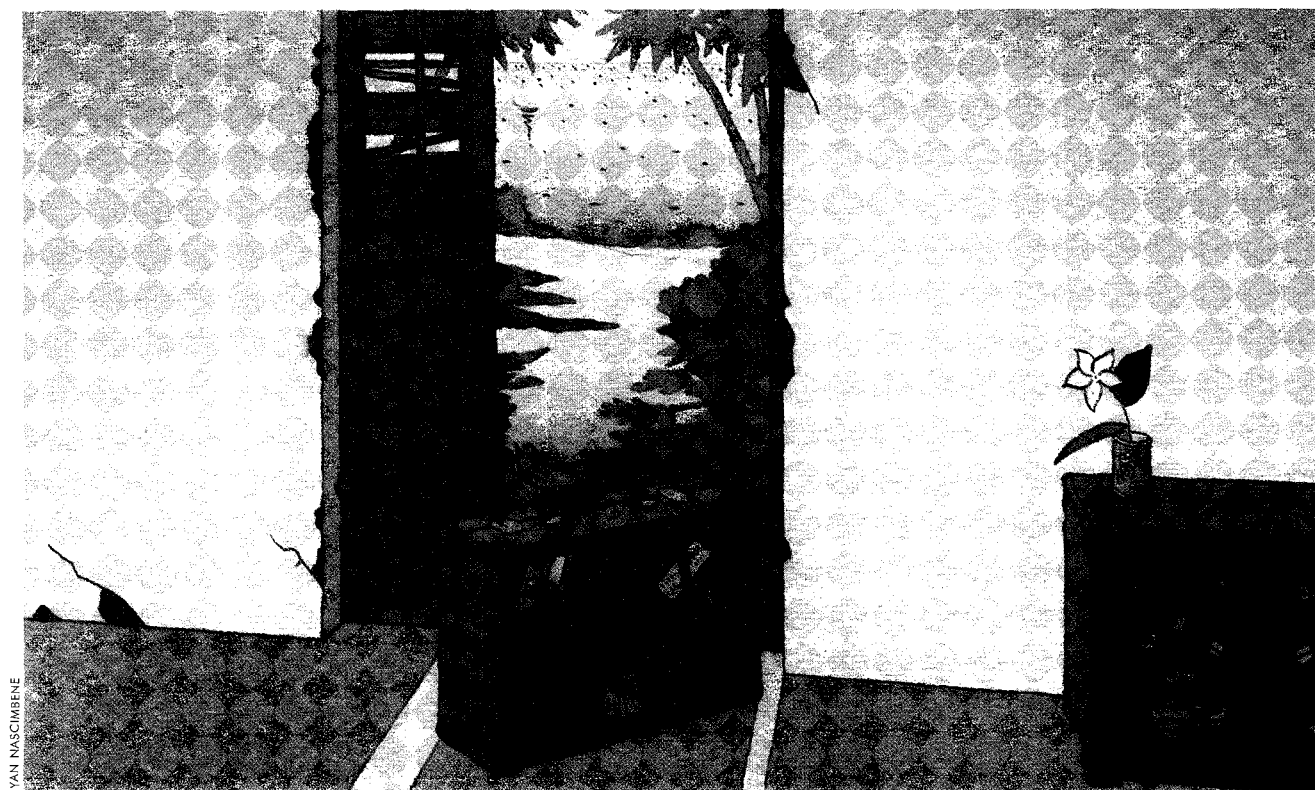
It is different for me. I am a traveler by profession but not by instinct. My

people have not lived outside the British Isles since the dawn of time—my English maternal forebears for at least a thousand years, my Welsh paternal ancestors probably never. In my white wheelhouse on the *Saphir*, among the magnolias of Vicksburg, watching the ships sail by in Hong Kong, winebibbing on my Venetian balcony, sociable in Manhattan, or tobogganing in our alpine garden in France—in none of our adopted homes, though I was always deliriously happy, was I ever entirely settled.

This is because I was always, at the back of my heart, homesick. On another

form of nostalgia, if only because, generally speaking, it really can be gratified. We cannot return to the past, but we can go home again. In my case homesickness is related to something the Welsh language calls *hiraeth*. This overworked word (the Welsh are big on emotions) means literally “longing,” “nostalgia,” or sometimes plain “grief.” It has come to signify, however, something even less exact: longing, yes, but for nothing definite; nostalgia, but for an indeterminate past; grief without cause or explanation. *Hiraeth*!—an insidious summation of all that is most poetical, most musical, most regretful,

prosperous, more tolerant, or more comfortable countries because they have had to, but we read in their old diaries how forlornly, until the last dim line of the Welsh shore disappeared from view, they lingered together over the rails of their emigrant ships. Many of them presently became assimilated citizens of their new countries, but many more hoped all their lives to return to Wales, and sometimes they did. Joseph Jenkins from Tregaron, for example, who had become an archetypal Australian swagman during his long years down under, returned at last in his seventy-seventh year in order



YAN NASCIMBENE

day, in another place, in another mood, Browning wrote another verse, “Home-Thoughts, From Abroad,” remembering the chaffinch on its English orchard bough, the blossomed pear tree in the hedge, the careless rapture of the thrush’s call, and all the images and suggestions and evocations of his homeland. I am with him there, too: the swallows on their way south may call me to follow them, but that damned thrush, singing the same exuberant song over and over again, always summons me home.

Homesickness is the most delicious

most opaque, most evasive, most inextinguishable, in the character of Wales.

H*iraeth* it is, then, that makes me feel, even as I unpack the bags in our new and lovely Mediterranean villa, our quaint wooden house upon the fjord, or our Barbados penthouse, that I shan’t be there for long. I am not a settler, only a wanderer perhaps. I am not made to be an exile, and in this I am honoring the instincts of my paternal forebears down the ages. The Welsh have never been easy migrants. They have left their homes for more

to die in the hills of Cardiganshire.

This powerful homing instinct is inexplicable. The old Welsh emigrants had left Wales because their lives there were poor and miserable, yet nothing could suppress the *hiraeth* within them, and nothing can suppress it in me, either. Nobody, I swear, has had more pleasure from traveling than I have, and nobody has pushed more eagerly through the door of a rented house somewhere far away. Yet the old sensation nags at me always, part sweet, part sad, part consolation, part reproach. Most expatriates, if you press them, will

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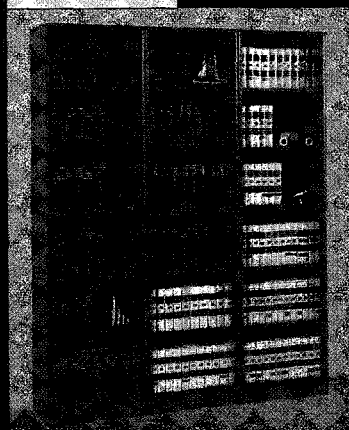
admit to something they miss during their idyllic residences abroad: decent eggs and bacon for the English, a proper beer cellar for the Germans, *The New York Times*, perhaps, or cornflakes for Americans. For me it is nothing so specific. A perceptive American once observed that a Welshman's truth was in the nature of a circle, and, similarly, what I crave when I am living abroad is rather in the form of a blur.

It is the sense of belonging that I miss, together with infusions of historical awareness and sensuality. I miss the stones of home. I miss the smell of the

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wood smoke and the sound of the river below the woods. I miss the murmur of the Welsh language. I miss my cat, Ibsen. I miss my books. I miss the old beams of my house and the tumble of possessions, memories, and reminders that tells me it is mine, all mine. I miss, of course, wherever I am, the ones I love the best, and I miss—well, not to put too fine a point upon it, I miss dear old Wales.

So I stand with Browning, either way. When the swallows fly south, I want to go with them, but when I hear that thrush calling, I need to go the other way: up our dusty, potholed lane, through the shabby old oak gates, into the familiar, the irreplaceable embrace of home, where there is no need for *hiraeth*, where love awaits me and the kettle's always on the boil. ▣

Jan Morris has written some forty books, most of them about travel. "Home Thoughts From Abroad" will appear in A House Somewhere, to be published this month by Lonely Planet.

PALATE AT LARGE
QUINOA SOUP

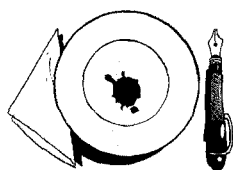
A traditional staple of the high, cool Andes

BY CORBY KUMMER

.....

I recently watched a scene of ancient beauty in the Andean highlands of Ecuador: women reaching skyward to pour just-threshed quinoa from shallow baskets onto blankets, so that the wind would winnow the wide streams of falling grain. They knelt to gather up the grain back into their baskets, and then let it fall once more before they set it aside in a pile.

I had traveled four hours south of Quito on bumpy, spectacularly scenic roads to see at close hand the harvest of a grain I ate ten or so years ago, when chefs eager to use



a "new" native crop embraced quinoa (pronounced *keen-wah*) as part of their New American cooking. The tiny, straw-yellow kernels, which look like plumped sesame seeds, occupied a place that had recently been held by hand-gathered wild rice and was soon to be taken by amaranth. (Today the novelty starch is Israeli couscous, pasta beads as big as giant tapioca.)

I never warmed to amaranth, but I did develop a taste for quinoa. It has some of the nutty flavor of wild rice but a less challenging texture, with a moment of caviar crunch before each bite becomes a pliant mouthful. It's pretty, too: each grain has a pearlescent halo, which turns out to be the extremely nutritious germ. Quinoa became my second favorite novelty grain after buckwheat (with its matchless toasted heartiness), but after a few home experiments I forgot about it. Then I learned of a newly available organic quinoa not only more environmentally responsible but also better than any I'd tasted. This was the quinoa I saw being winnowed on that volcanic hillside, where the sky seemed very close.

My guide was the importer, a Chicagoan named Bob Leventry, who had served for two years in Ecuador as a Peace Corps volunteer with his wife, Marjorie, a nutritionist, after retiring as

the head of an insurance company. They wanted to carry on the work they had done there, and looked for a way to help the Andean farmers they saw being cheated by middlemen; they also wanted to further the cause of organic farming.

The couple found a group of farmers within broadcast range of ERPE, a progressive radio station based in the

lively provincial capital of Riobamba. In the early 1960s an activist monsignor had founded the station to teach literacy and basic subjects to indigenous populations; it also aired music, of course,

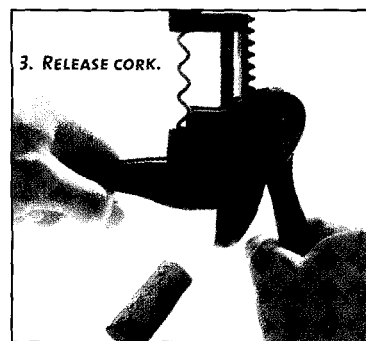
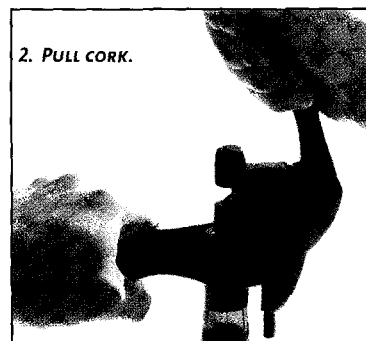
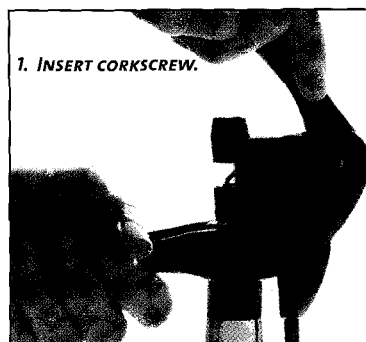
and lots of local interviews and news. In the 1980s ERPE became an independent nonprofit station with a wider social-service agenda. It broadcast lessons in modern organic-farming techniques, for example, and invited listeners to visit a model farm where ERPE grew, among other native crops, quinoa.

Bob Leventry promised ERPE that his new company, Inca Organics, would sell all the quinoa ERPE's listeners could grow. In just a few years they have had remarkable success, and not simply because Marjorie persuasively emphasizes what a nutritional powerhouse quinoa is. (Quinoa is not a true grain but the seed of a leafy plant; unlike grains, which lack at least one essential amino acid, it offers a complete source of protein, and because it is unrelated to wheat, people sensitive to gluten can eat it.) The company has succeeded because Inca Organics quinoa is cleaner, fresher, sweeter, and livelier tasting than the kind most health-food markets sell. (The Web site, www.IncaOrganics.com, gives links to mail-order sources and stores that stock it; the phone number is 312-575-9880.)

The Ecuadorian farmers have benefited too. In 1997, the first year of the ERPE quinoa experiment, 220 families took part; last year 4,025 families grew quinoa for Inca Organics. Each

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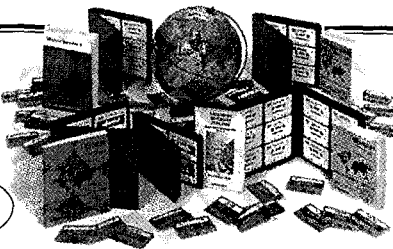
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family keeps one third of its production for its own use. Last month ERPE received the Slow Food Award for biodiversity at a ceremony in Turin, for its pioneering combination of radio and on-site farming help.

When the day's work was finished, the Mocha Pingos, the farm family I visited, served us a soup—a staple in the high, cool Andes. The family soup was nearly clear, a pale orange with bright orange flecks of achiote, or annatto seed, sautéed in lard to concentrate and mellow its slightly peppery flavor. I've adapted a recipe from Marjorie Leventry, who for ease uses cumin and paprika where the family would use achiote; in *Soup: A Way of Life*, Barbara Kafka gives instructions for annatto butter, a primary component of the fantastic variety of Ecuadorian soups she discovered.

For four servings of traditional quinoa soup, heat one tablespoon of oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Sauté in the warm oil half a cup of chopped green onion, keeping an inch of the green, or yellow onion; three garlic cloves, smashed, peeled, and chopped; half a teaspoon each of cumin and paprika (or one tablespoon of Kafka's annatto butter); and half a teaspoon of dried oregano. Stir for five minutes or so, until the onion is thoroughly wilted. Add half a cup of well-rinsed quinoa, five and a half cups of water, one teaspoon of kosher salt, half a pound of peeled floury (baking) potatoes cut into half-inch cubes, and a cup of chopped cabbage or any hearty greens. Cover and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for twenty minutes, or until the potatoes are soft. Stir in a tablespoon of minced cilantro and serve.

This simple soup is surprisingly satisfying. Optional stir-in ingredients, of the kind at markets and soup stands in Ecuador, include ground roasted peanuts, diced avocado, and crumbled fresh cheese similar to Mexican queso blanco. I won't give directions for the special ingredient the family put in our soup as a sign of respect for visitors: guinea pig, the Ecuadorian answer to chicken. Some native traditions translate better than others. ▀

Corby Kummer is a senior editor of *The Atlantic*.

NOTES FROM ANTIQUITY

Watching a play by Euripides or reading poetry by Sappho is perhaps as incomplete an experience today as watching a "play" by Wagner or reading "poetry" by Stephen Sondheim would be

BY TOBY LESTER

.....

Dimitrios Yatromanolakis studies early classical music—the *really* early stuff. Over lunch recently, in a café not far from his office, at Harvard University, I asked him to describe what he's most interested in. "I should spell out something in advance," he said almost apologetically. "When I say 'musicians,' I often mean poets. Euripides. Aristophanes. Sappho. And when we talk about 'musical scores,' what we are talking about, of course, are papyri, parchments, and stones."

Yatromanolakis is a thirty-two-year-old classicist from Greece who has in recent years devoted much of his time to the somewhat lonely task of trying to study, reconstruct, and perform actual pieces of ancient Greek music. It's a rigorous and unconventional scholarly enterprise that requires expertise in fields as varied as anthropology, archaeology, iconography, music theory, paleography, poetic and dramatic traditions, and—of course—the classics.

Greek poets and dramatists regularly set their work to music themselves, and from at least the fifth century B.C. on they used a highly sophisticated system of musical notation. The very idea of poetry, in fact, originally tended to imply music, and Athenian tragedy at its artistic peak, in the fifth century B.C., was a complex combination of poetic text, solo and choral song, recitation with instrumental accompaniment, and dance. This has an unsettling if little-recognized implication: watching a play by Euripides or reading poetry by Sappho is perhaps as incomplete an experience today as watching a "play" by Wagner or reading "poetry" by Stephen Sondheim would be.

Yatromanolakis is an earnest, soft-spoken man who wears wire-rimmed glasses and dresses with the rumpled formality that one somehow expects of

a classical scholar. "You know those amazing sculptures that we think of when we think of ancient Greece?" he asked me. "These were not completely white, of course. That's mainly our projection. It's the same with ancient Greek poetry—we project a lot onto it. A lot. We analyze it in a very text-oriented way. But music was deeply embedded in ancient Greek life; the evidence for this is abundant. Really, we can't understand



ancient Greek culture—and this is *our* culture, to a certain degree—without understanding the function of its music."

For centuries now the received wisdom among classicists has been that the actual melodies of ancient Greek music (as opposed to literary references and iconographic material) vanished, irretrievably, long ago. Trying to resurrect the surviving pieces—the existence of which is generally known only to a few specialists—has been viewed as, at best, an entertaining but frivolous distraction from more-mainstream work. Attempts have nevertheless been made in recent decades, the best known and

most significant of which are *Musiques de l'Antiquité Grecque*, a 1993 recording produced by the Ensemble Kérylos under the direction of the French archaeologist Annie Bélis, and *Musique de la Grèce Antique*, a 1979 recording by the Spanish musician Gregorio Paniagua. Neither is a rigorous, nuanced work of scholarship, however. The Bélis recording uses anachronistically modern vocal styles and makes little attempt to contextualize the music, and the Paniagua recording is a highly impressionistic rendering by a musician with no training in the classics.

Yatromanolakis is undaunted by the skeptics. "Sure, we have lost most of this music," he told me. "However, there is so much we have lost from *all* fields of antiquity. What makes it acceptable, for instance, to study religion in antiquity but not music? In both cases the scholarship has to be at least somewhat hypothetical. We can't be *absolutely* sure about all of our results, of course. We don't even know how medieval music was performed, but we still do perform it all the time. And, you know, so many people are studying the smallest text fragments we have from Sappho—just a few words—but almost nobody is studying in any depth the pieces of music that have been preserved. We have pieces, for example, from a Cretan composer named Mesomedes. Complete pieces of ancient music!"

About sixty examples of ancient Greek music are extant. Some twenty of them, including a fragment from Euripides' *Orestes*, are well enough preserved to be studied fruitfully and, Yatromanolakis believes, performed with a considerable degree of accuracy. In addition, there are abundant ancient Greek literary references to music, among them descriptions of various instruments and their tunings, of the role that music played in secular and religious life, and of the influence that music was said to have on both individuals and the body politic; most significant are elaborate treatises that explain the system of musical notation and the various intervals, scales, and modes on which it was based.

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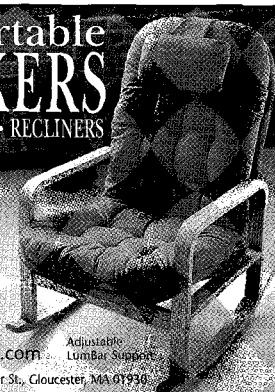
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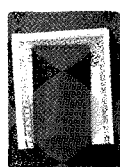
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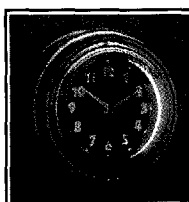
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The problem is that few people aside from classical scholars have known that this material exists, and those scholars, not having been trained as musicians or musicologists, have had very little interest in it. Students of music, for their part, are almost never classicists with a strong grounding in such arcana as papyrology and epigraphy. Scores of ancient Greek music are almost completely inaccessible to them, except in often inaccurate modern transcriptions.

Yatromanolakis aims to bridge the gap. He has degrees in the classics from the University of Athens (B.A.) and Oxford University, in England (M.A., Ph.D.). He recently completed a post-doctoral fellowship at Harvard and has just finished a three-year appointment to Harvard's distinguished Society of Fellows—a sort of incubator for exceptional young academics from all disciplines. He also happens to be a lifelong student of the history and the historical performance of music; a fan of classical Chinese music and world music; a composer in his own right; and a practicing countertenor who also plays the piano, the classical guitar, the sitar, and an ancient Greek plucked instrument called the cithara.

I asked Yatromanolakis if he could show me some examples of what he has been working on. He rummaged through his backpack and pulled out a photograph of a stele, originally from Asia Minor, that now resides in a museum in Denmark. On the stele, chiseled in bold Greek letters, is the complete score of a funerary song ordered inscribed by a certain Seikilos, who lived sometime in the first or second century. At a glance the inscription appears to be nothing but text, but closer inspection reveals smaller Greek letters and signs perched above some of the words, and a series of dots and lines hovering above these letters. The small letters, Yatromanolakis told me, represent the notes, and the lines are rhythmic symbols. There was apparently no need to specify tempo,

which may have been suggested by the poetic meter of the text.

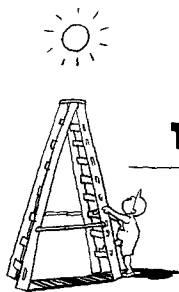
I asked Yatromanolakis if he would sing the piece for me. He stared at the score, focused hard for a couple of seconds, and then, to the surprise of those seated around us, proceeded to sing a brief, quietly beautiful song. It sounded at once familiar and alien. I was acutely aware of not fully understanding what I was hearing, but I also experienced an almost *Jurassic Park*-like shiver of excitement at the thought that I was witnessing something extinct being brought back to life.

After finishing the song, Yatromanolakis blushed and told me that his goals include producing a CD of the first "historically informed" performances of all surviving pieces and organizing public performances of ancient Greek music—first using only voice (the instrument, he pointed out, that has changed least over time) and then adding carefully re-created ancient instruments. When pressed about which professional classical and pop performers might, with training, be able to do the material justice, Yatromanolakis suggested that the star Canadian countertenor Daniel Taylor would be "perfect." He also whimsically floated the idea of the Icelandic pop star Björk.

Hearing these thoughts made me wonder aloud whether there will ever be a time when we might experience Greek drama in something like its original musical form. "This is not likely," he told me gravely, shaking his head. "We just don't have enough material." Then he brightened and leaned toward me, somewhat conspiratorially. "But, you know, it is not impossible," he said. "Especially if new papyrus fragments come to light. In the twentieth century we found new Euripides and Sophocles, in Egypt. New Sophocles, after all those centuries! So why not new music? If we found the whole score of a Greek tragedy—can you imagine?" ▮

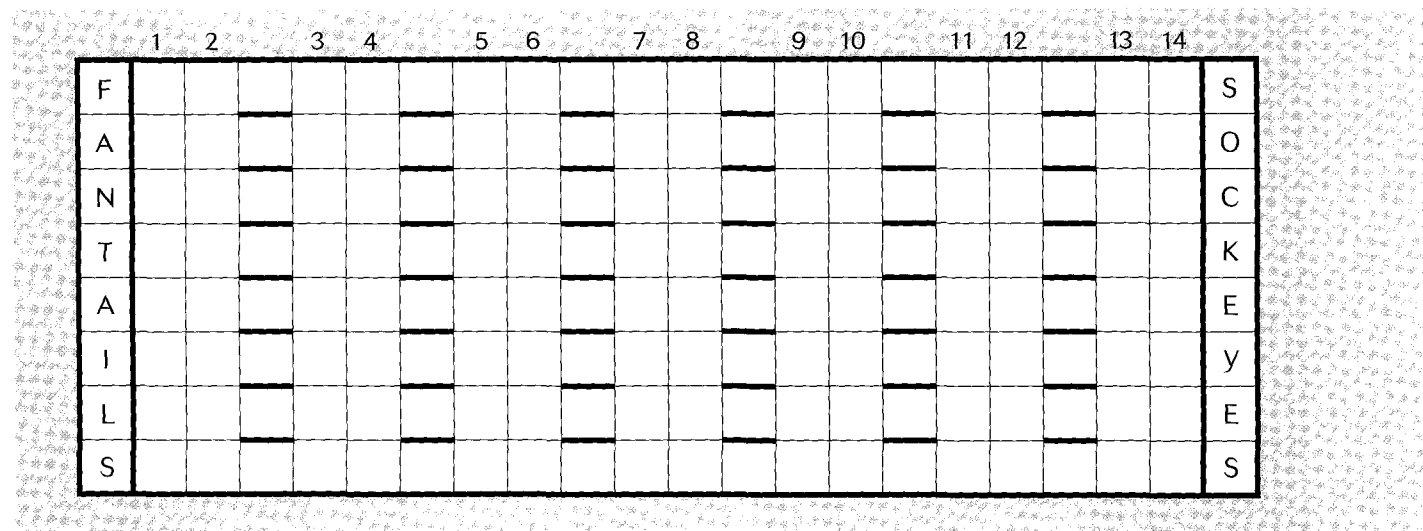
Toby Lester is a senior editor of The Atlantic.

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THE PUZZLER

by EMILY COX and HENRY RATHVON



Gridiron

It's the birds against the fish in this year's Cryptic Bowl football classic. The feathered Fantails, with their name in the left end zone, march across the field four times from left to right in Across rows; the scaly Sockeyes do the same from right to left. Each of these eight drives consists of three or four words clued in order, but the eight drives themselves are clued in random order; to locate the Across answers in the grid, use the eight-letter Downs (which are normal) as guides. Five of the eight drives "score" by having a final letter cross into an end zone. By circling these five letters in the finished grid and reading them in order (the left end zone first, then the right), solvers will confirm the winning team. Answers include one proper noun; the words clued last in drives D and C, and also the first Down answer, are less than common.

Last month's Puzzler solution is on page 140.

ACROSS

- A. Improve Giant broadcast (7)
Kick catches a referee out of uniform somehow (8)
Work hard except when gaining 50 (5)

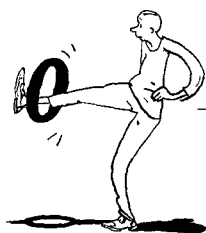
- B. Rams' erratic throwers (4)
Large, like this Cowboy equipment (5)
Saint, while covering yard, hardly seems to budge (5)
L.A.'s importing German beers (6)
- C. Right guards initially seem to do well (7)
Ran after a member of Miami and didn't exactly rush (6)
Official tumbling past in fight (8)
- D. Coveted lineman comes around to compete (6)
Running back, about to fall down (5)
Center of Raiders split pile-up (5)
Coin flipped in Tangelo Bowl (4)
- E. Starr, at first down, put in a ringer? (6)
Blowout in Florida uniform (4,4)
Place for a reserve of Georgia wasn't too great (3,4)
- F. At last, football stadium worker gets richer (6)
By year's end, Elway's missing with passes on the run (6)
Cowboy ace or bum carrying pigskin (9)
- G. Line shuffled in to take a breather and get back in the action (8)
Pound Kenneth forward and Leonard backward (6)
Spotted Buffalo player's diving duck (7)
- H. Arena I'd renovated for an unamazing figure? (7)

Camera shots of hike from the rear (4)
A neurotic wacko seizes article about Jets' operations? (10)

DOWN

1. Fat Fitzgerald fans
2. Gold ring lying in westward stream for so long (*two words*)
3. Programs about completely wet spots
4. Education established in intimate base
5. Ornamental figures in reference penned by drudges
6. Hurried back, bearing stories and laments
7. They illuminate most of shore next to seabirds
8. Try beets cooked a secondary way
9. A town has Herb beheaded for sarcasm
10. Scarcity caught by camera Rene's shooting
11. Bad report finished off the Cuban cigar
12. Chuck keeps tree for cutting
13. Orthodontist's work fee
14. Modern playwright's engaging right publishers

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, Mass. 02114.



WORD COURT

by BARBARA WALLRAFF

MARIE SPECK, of Buena Park, California, writes, "I am appalled by the free use of the word *gentleman*. I've been hearing it used more and more, by the police and the news media, in reference to men who have broken the law. But I have never been more shocked or disgusted than when I heard a local newswoman refer to the accused kidnapper-murderer of Samantha Runnion, a five-year-old child, as a *gentleman*. Has *gentleman* now replaced *man*? My dictionary defines the word as 'a man of good breeding.' Am I old-fashioned, or is my dictionary outdated?"

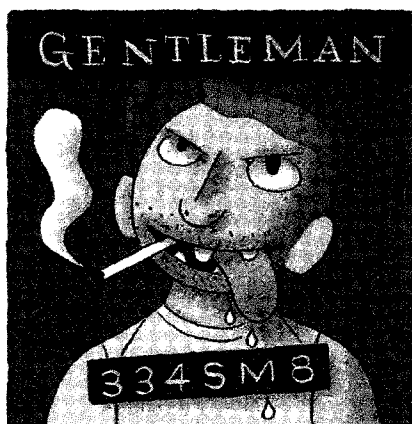
Neither. But you're right that *gentleman* turns up in many inappropriate contexts. For instance, on a *Today* show segment in July about the Runnion case, Katie Couric interviewed Mike Carona, the sheriff of Orange County, California, where Samantha disappeared. She asked about a suspect being sought, "Any chance he might turn himself in?" and Carona responded, "I would hope that he would. There's only two options in my book. This *gentleman* turns himself in or we're going to track him down and bring him in—bring him into custody."

And in August, Connie Chung, of CNN, talked with Sheriff H. F. Cassell, of Henry County, Virginia, about the recent abduction of nine-year-old Jennifer Short and the murder of her parents. She asked about someone the sheriff's department had interrogated, "Did this *gentleman* have a key to their house, or was he able to get in easily, do you know?"

Let's remember—and be glad—that law-enforcement officers and journalists have been trained to speak of people respectfully. Let's remember, too, the presumption of innocence that is central to our legal system. Once someone is convicted of a heinous crime, words quite different from *gentleman* apply. Often, though, using *gentleman* instead of *man* is just a silly genteelism, and it's not much

worse in reference to a criminal investigation than it is in this recent citation from *The Sacramento Bee*: "Not so routine is the 800-pound man the Coroner's Office received not long ago. Firefighters had to cut a hole in the *gentleman's* trailer to get him on his way." As you suggest, *man* would have been a better word choice in all these quotations.

CHRISTINA PITTS, of Grosse Pointe Woods, Michigan, writes, "As an English major, with a graduate degree (M.A., English literature), and as a lover of the language, I find it increasingly shocking



that in virtually every 'knowledgeable' magazine article or story I see the misuse of the possessive. For example, 'He is a friend of Frank's.' The correct use of the possessive, as I recall, is that the apostrophe substitutes for the word *of*. That is, 'He is a friend of Frank,' or 'He is Frank's friend.' But to say 'He is a friend of Frank's' is ridiculously, tautologically redundant, not to minimize its offensiveness to those of us in the know."

Would you say "a friend of him"? Double possessives like "a friend of Frank's" may be "freaks of idiom," as H. W. Fowler deemed them in his *Modern English Usage*, but idiomatic they are. Sir Ernest Gowers amplified on this point in his 1965 revision of Fowler's book,

observing that Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* begins, "Nay, but this dotage of our general's o'erflows the measure." Possessives, including the word *of*, do jobs besides indicating relationships of possessing or having. The examples with which grammarians like to demonstrate this point often involve the word *picture* or *portrait*: "a picture of Frank's"—a picture that Frank possesses—is different from "a picture of Frank."

When, exactly, should we use double possessives? This is controversial. My rule is to experimentally substitute a pronoun for the noun, as I did at the outset of this reply; if I'd say "a friend of his," then I say "a friend of Frank's."

DAN GREEN, of Wallingford, Connecticut, writes, "The use of *impactful* is running rampant, especially in my corporation's highest levels. I know in my soul this is wrong, but I need a well-articulated explanation. Please help me respond and stop the spread of this blight."

Many of us still wince when the verb *impact* is used figuratively. The current edition of the *American Heritage Dictionary* reports that 95 percent of its usage panel "disapproves of the use of *impact* as a transitive verb in the sentence 'Companies have used disposable techniques that have a potential for impacting our health.'" But the same usage note goes on to say that the "use of *impact* has become so common in the working language of corporations and institutions that many speakers have begun to regard it as standard." Let's hope we can yet draw a line in the sand on this side of the adjective *impactful*. Do you need to tell your colleagues more than that scarcely any dictionaries recognize *impactful* as a word?

Do you have a language question or dispute? Write to Word Court in care of The Atlantic Monthly, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, MA 02114, or send e-mail to msgrammar@theatlantic.com. All letters become the property of Word Court. Ms. Grammar is also on the Web, at www.theatlantic.com/courtrecord.

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